THE ART OF MASS EFFECT™ ANDROMEDA

THE ART OF

MASS EFFECT™

ANDROMEDA

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MASS EFFECT™

ANDROMEDA

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AND JOEL MACMILLAN

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THE ART OF MASS EFFECT™: ANDROMEDA

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FOREWORD

Mass Effect: Andromeda represents a new beginning for the series that debuted almost ten years ago. With *Andromeda*, the goal was to re-create that feeling of discovering something for the first time. That excitement of traveling to places that seemed familiar and grounded, while simultaneously alien and wonderful. *Andromeda* is a whole new adventure—one that begins in a distant galaxy—with some familiar faces, and many new ones.

While it was important that *Andromeda* stay true to the *Mass Effect* worlds created so far, one of the elements that made the original game so compelling was that we dared to dream of things that hadn't been done before. Innovation and unbridled curiosity have always been at the heart of *Mass Effect*. So, while the team stayed true to the spirit of the original, we continued to challenge ourselves to go further.

Building on the foundations of the trilogy, we began to imagine what the *Mass Effect* universe would look like in a next-gen, Frostbite-powered world. Characters would come to life like never before, weapons and powers would feel more visceral, and environments would be vividly realistic—no matter how alien. Ultimately it was a chance to bring the original vision of *Mass Effect* into the future we'd always imagined.

I've been lucky enough to be a part of *Mass Effect* for the past dozen years, and I'm honored and excited to be sharing this new beginning with all our fans. I hope you enjoy this peek into the journey we've gone through to bring you *Mass Effect: Andromeda*.

—MAC WALTERS, CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Artists often fear the blank canvas . . .

It didn't take me long to realize that being an art director on the *Mass Effect* franchise comes with some pretty big shoes to fill. Who could forget the sleek lines of the *Normandy* cruising through space, or the Citadel silhouetted against the backdrop of a nebula? *Mass Effect* is as well known for its gripping narrative as it is for its evocative imagery.

Well, as it turns out the universe is a big canvas.

To begin with, I can honestly say the members of the art team for *Mass Effect: Andromeda* were the most motivated and creative people I've ever worked with. Together we spent countless hours creating and refining the species that would inhabit the Andromeda Galaxy and I can say with the utmost confidence that *visually* the kett, Remnant, and angara will be memorable additions to the franchise.

In the end, a story is only as good as its setting, and with *Andromeda* we're talking about a galactic-scale stage! With this project we have endeavored to create something as original and alien as possible, and as I look back at what we've created I feel a great swell of pride at the sprawling landscapes and the stunning depths of the Andromeda Galaxy.

We weren't given a blank canvas to work from, though; we were challenged to build the best *Mass Effect* to date. By comparison, a blank canvas would have seemed like a napkin sketch. It's impossible to capture the effort and talent that went into making this game . . . but the following pages will give you an idea.

—JOEL MACMILLAN, ART DIRECTOR

EXPLORERS

THE ANDROMEDA INITIATIVE

CORA HARPER

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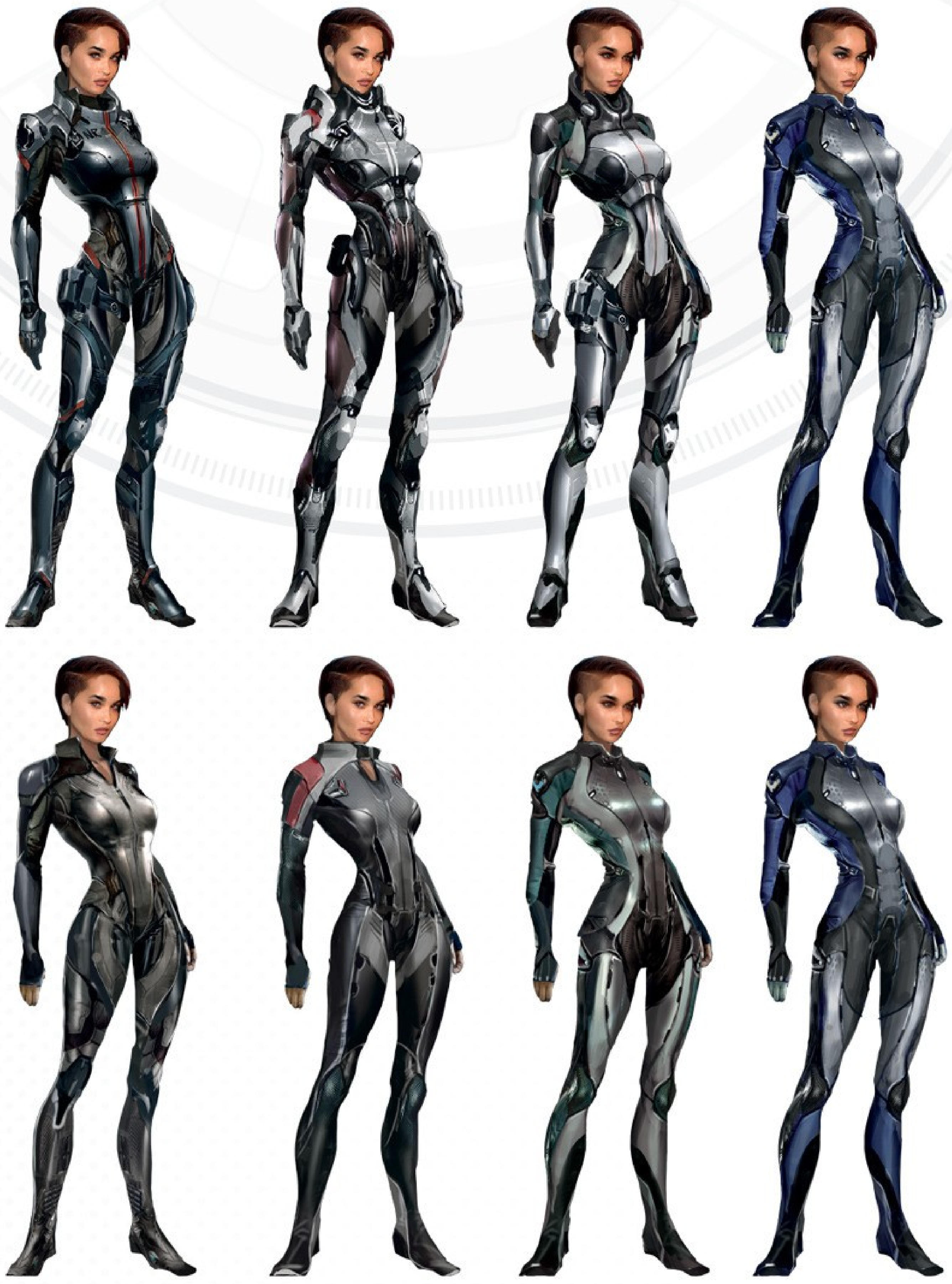
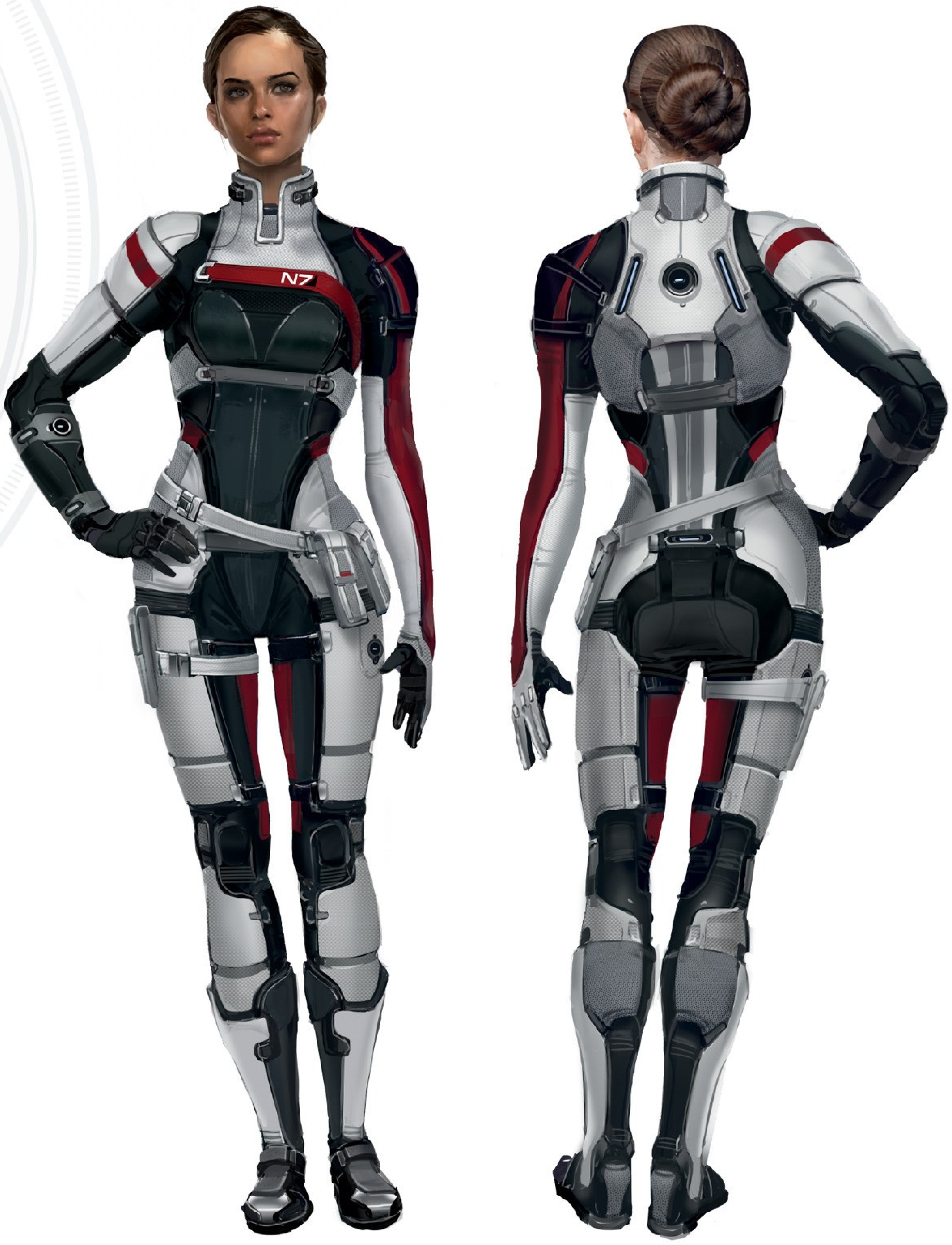
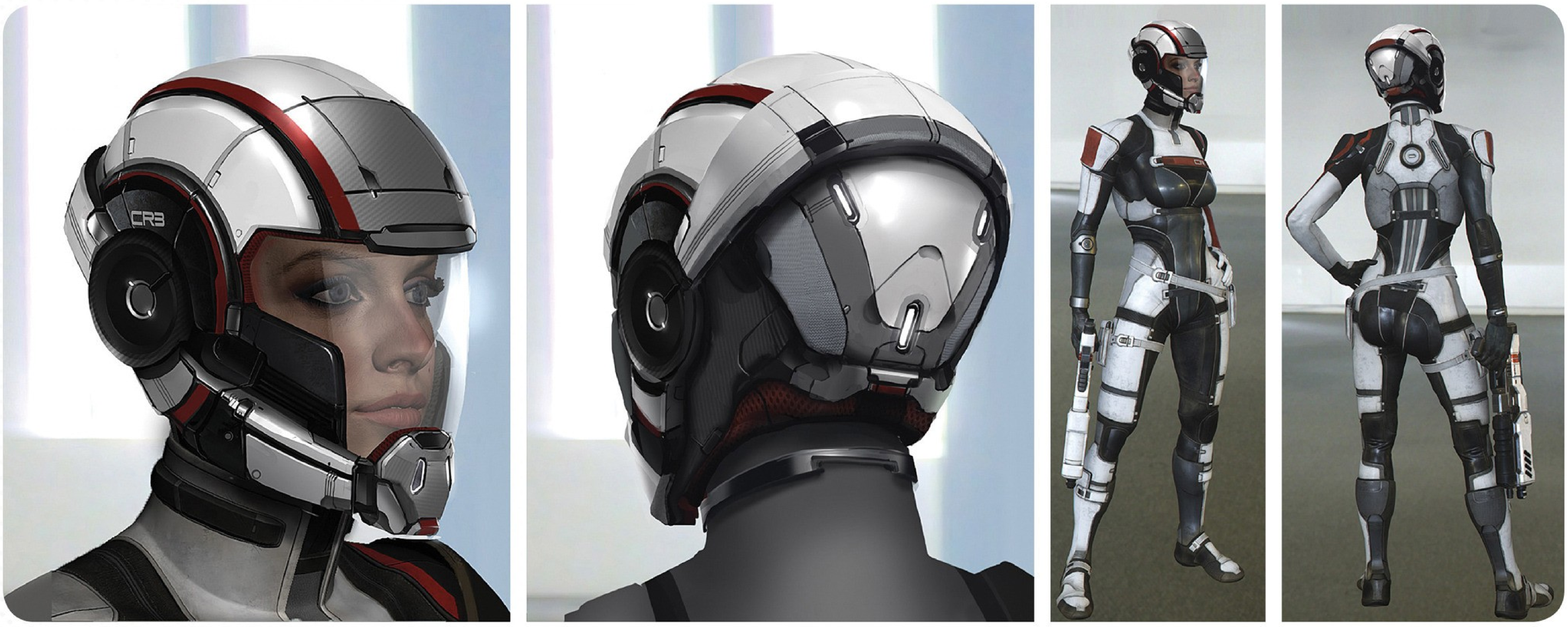
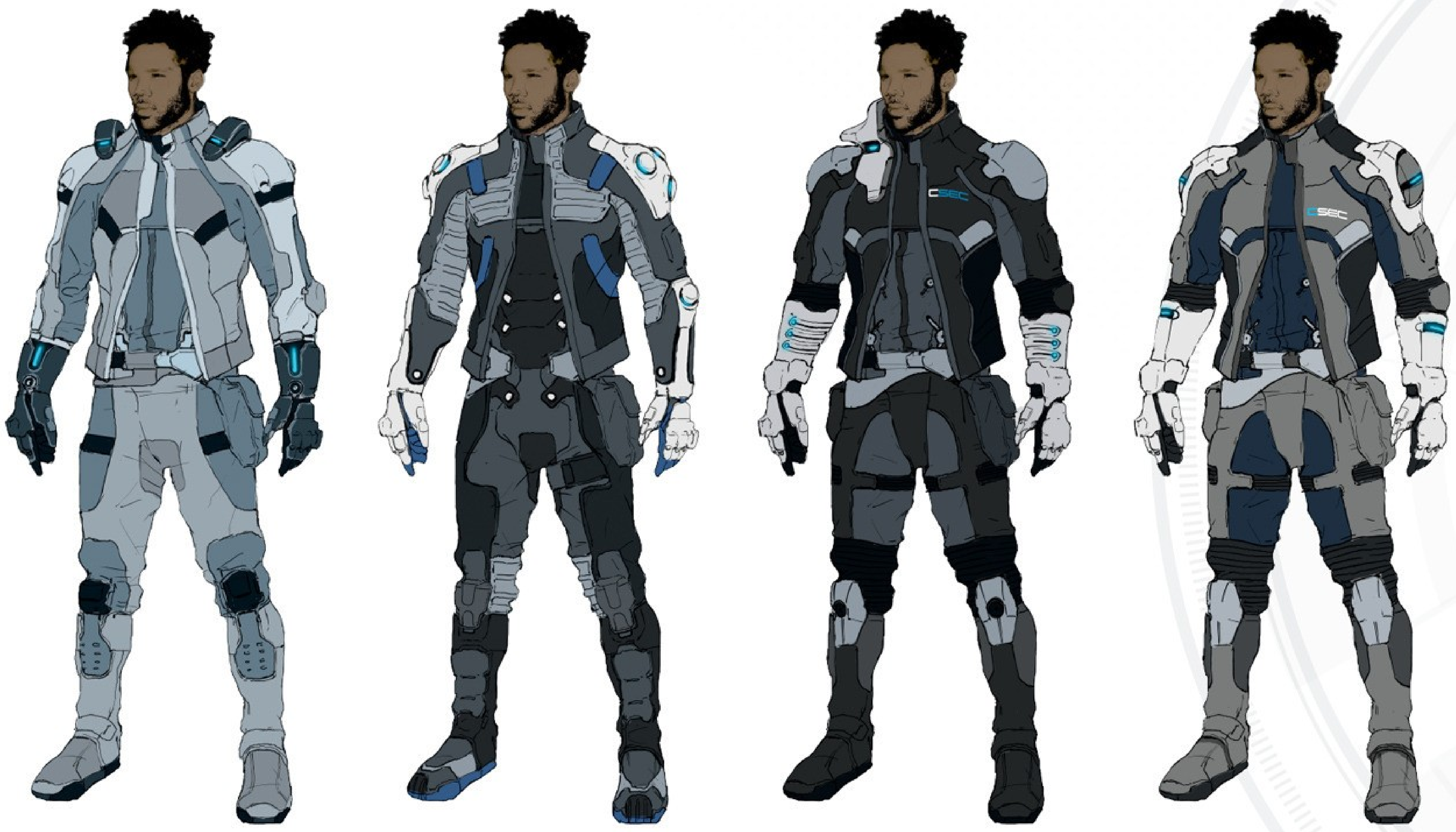
Ben Lo: Cora was one of the first squad members we worked on for *Andromeda*. She was also one of the toughest characters to develop because of her background. She is a professional human soldier that was trained by asari commandos. It was very tricky to find a good balance between the slick human palette—which is always about form and function—and the asari palette, which has lots of curves and a bit of sex appeal.







Herbert Lowis: Cora was a lot of fun to model. Creating *Mass Effect*'s female characters can be a challenge since the armor tends to be slicker compared to the male characters. The goal was to create a more military-type female, but she also needed to be a love interest. She went through quite a few iterations, but in the end we are very happy about how she turned out.



LIAM KOSTA

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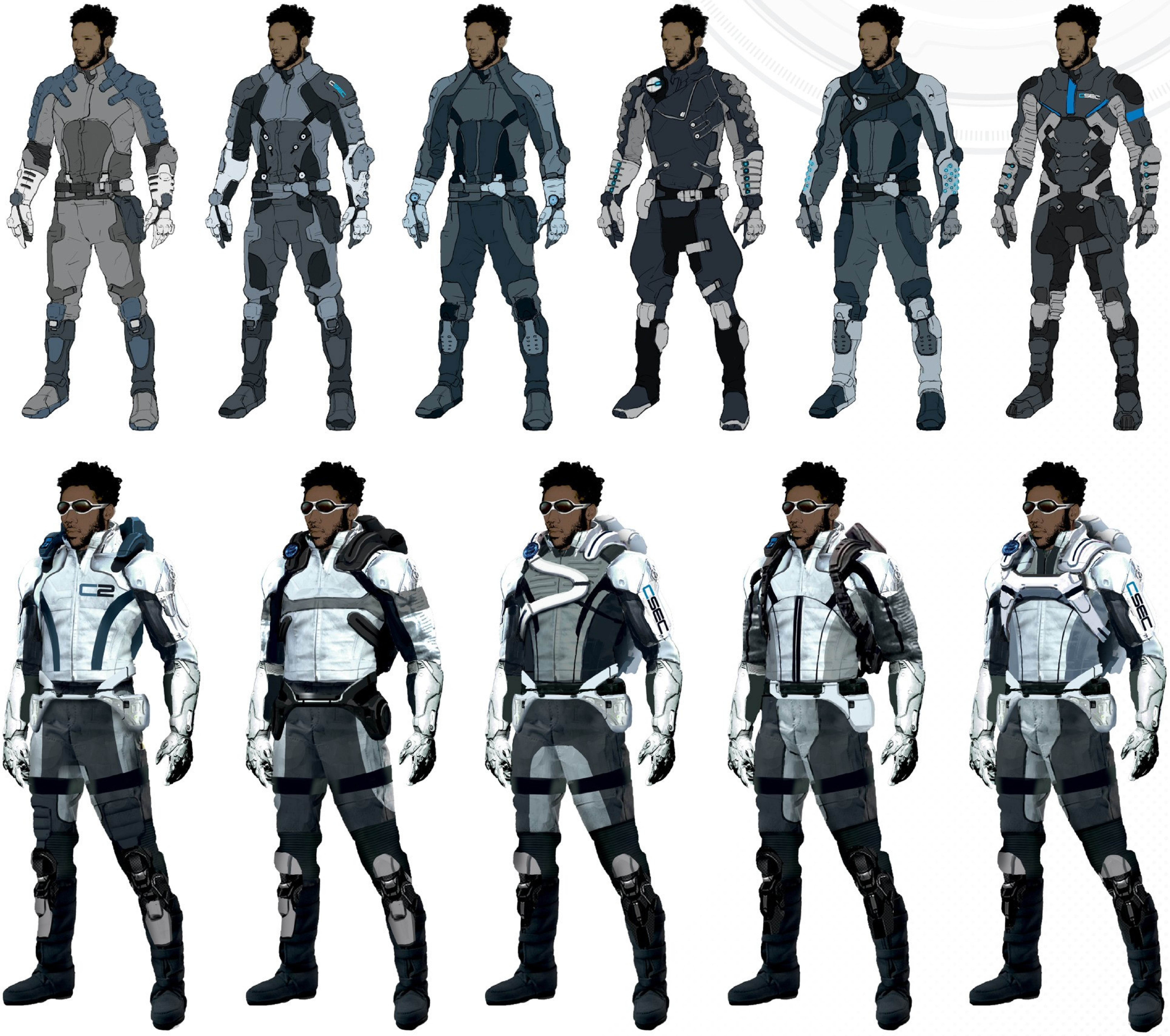
Brian Sum: Liam was initially described as "the young guy with all the cool gadgets." The main criteria were that he sport a cool biker jacket and that he would be equipped with dual gauntlets and a jump-jet. It was definitely a challenge trying to jell all the elements together without making them feel arbitrarily forced in there.



Christopher Cao: Liam went through many iterations in the concept phase, from big heavy armor to a very slick dynamic design. We opted for form and function, which led us to a more simplified and grounded aesthetic.

NAKMOR DRACK

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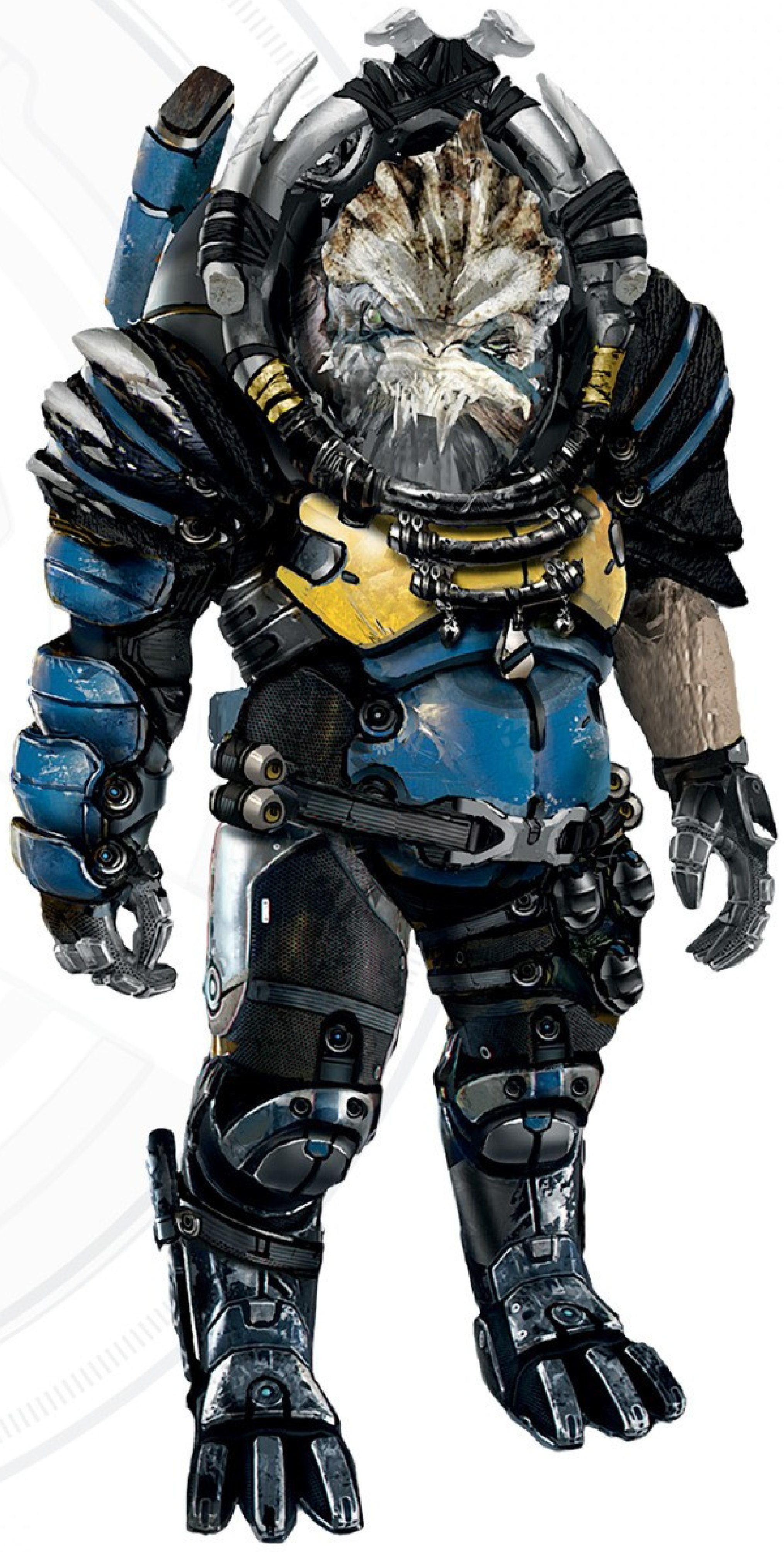
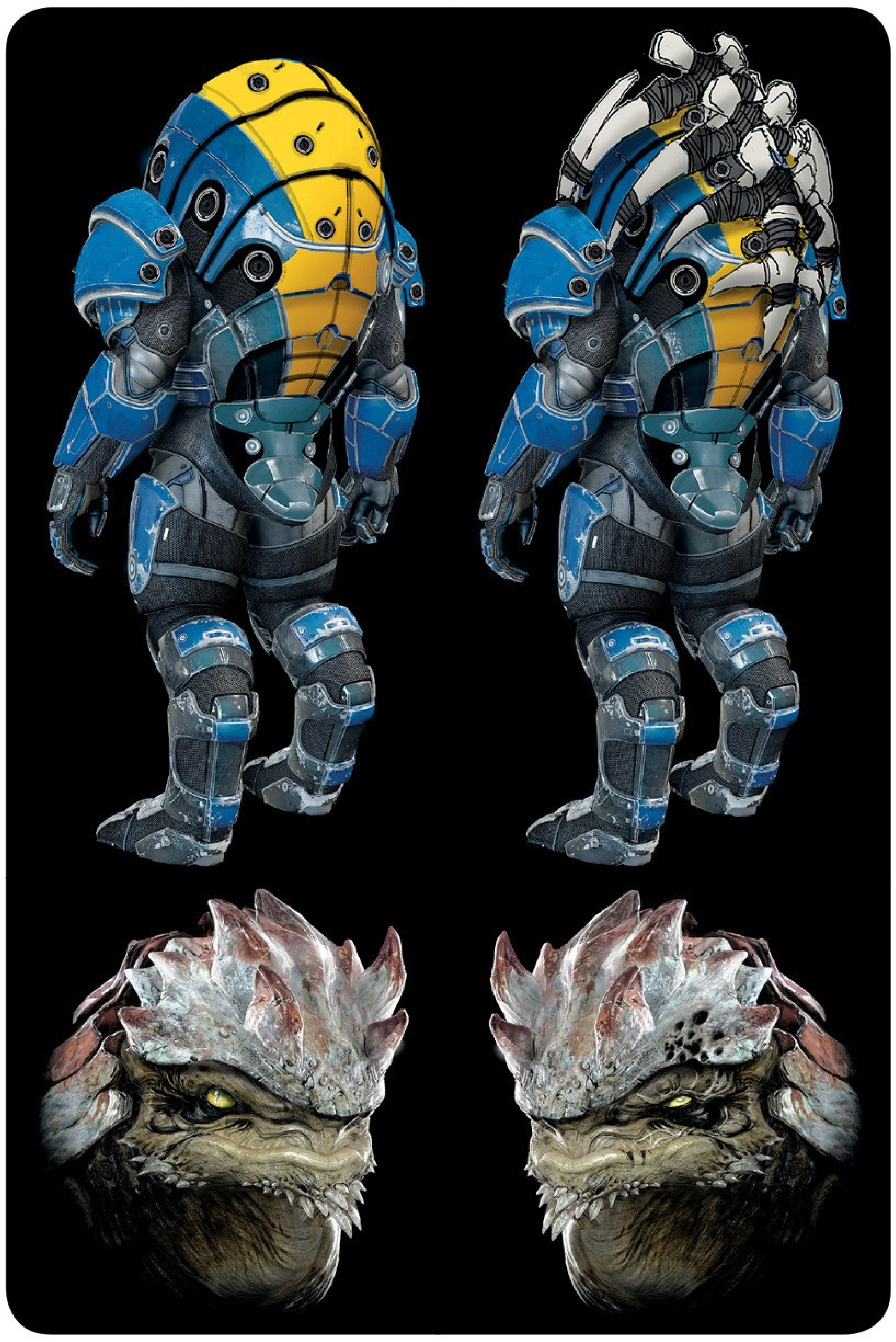
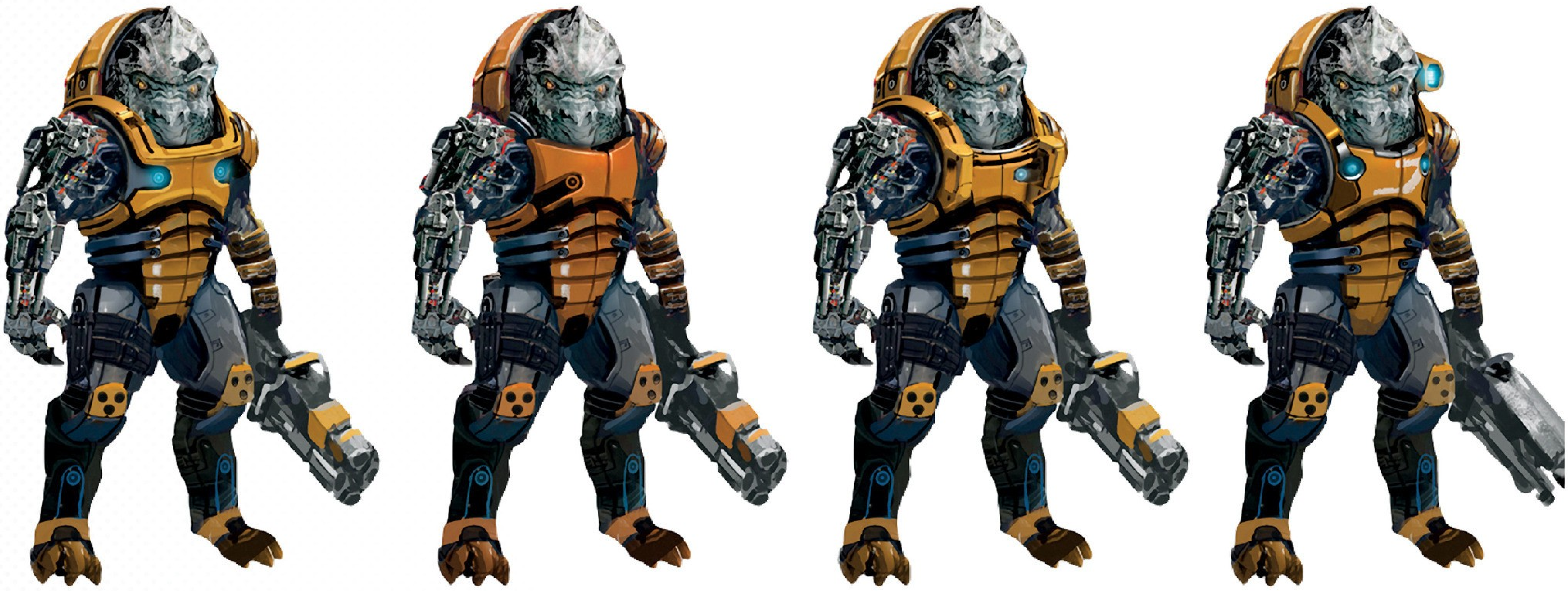
BL: Designing Drack was also extraordinarily tricky. Drack is one of the most respected veteran krogan in the *Mass Effect* universe, so you want him to stand out from all the other krogan.

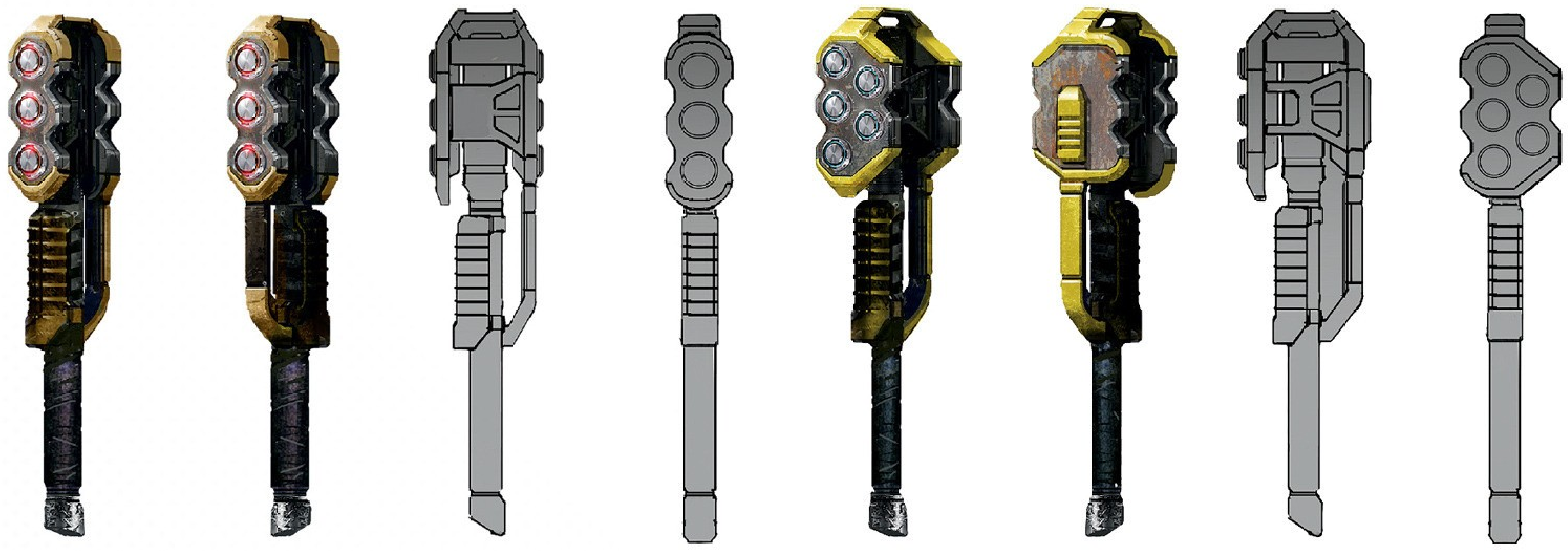
Wrex, from the original *Mass Effect* series, was such a memorable badass, so we wanted to create something in the same direction while still remaining unique. We tried exploring the different relics that he has accumulated in past adventures—pelts, furs, and bones—something that would bulk him up and make him an impressive old veteran leader.

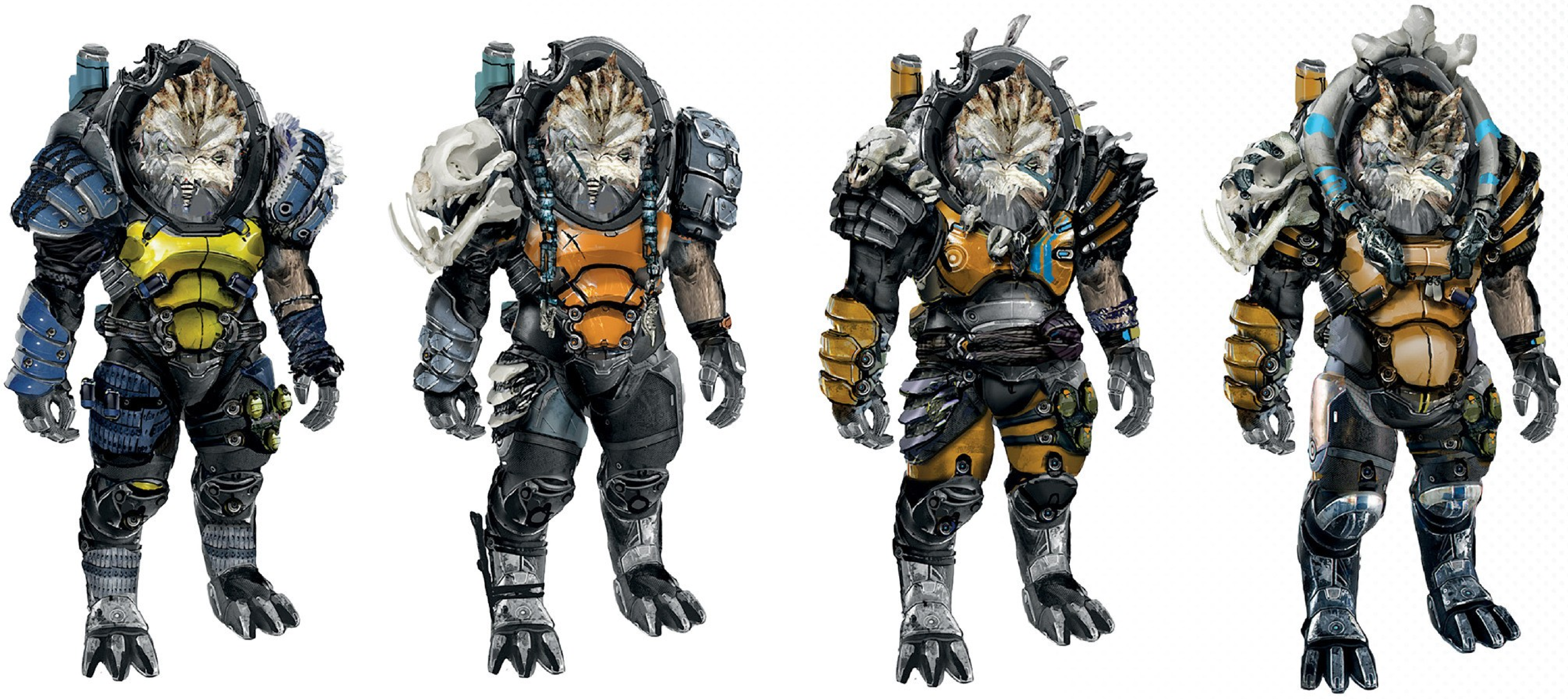


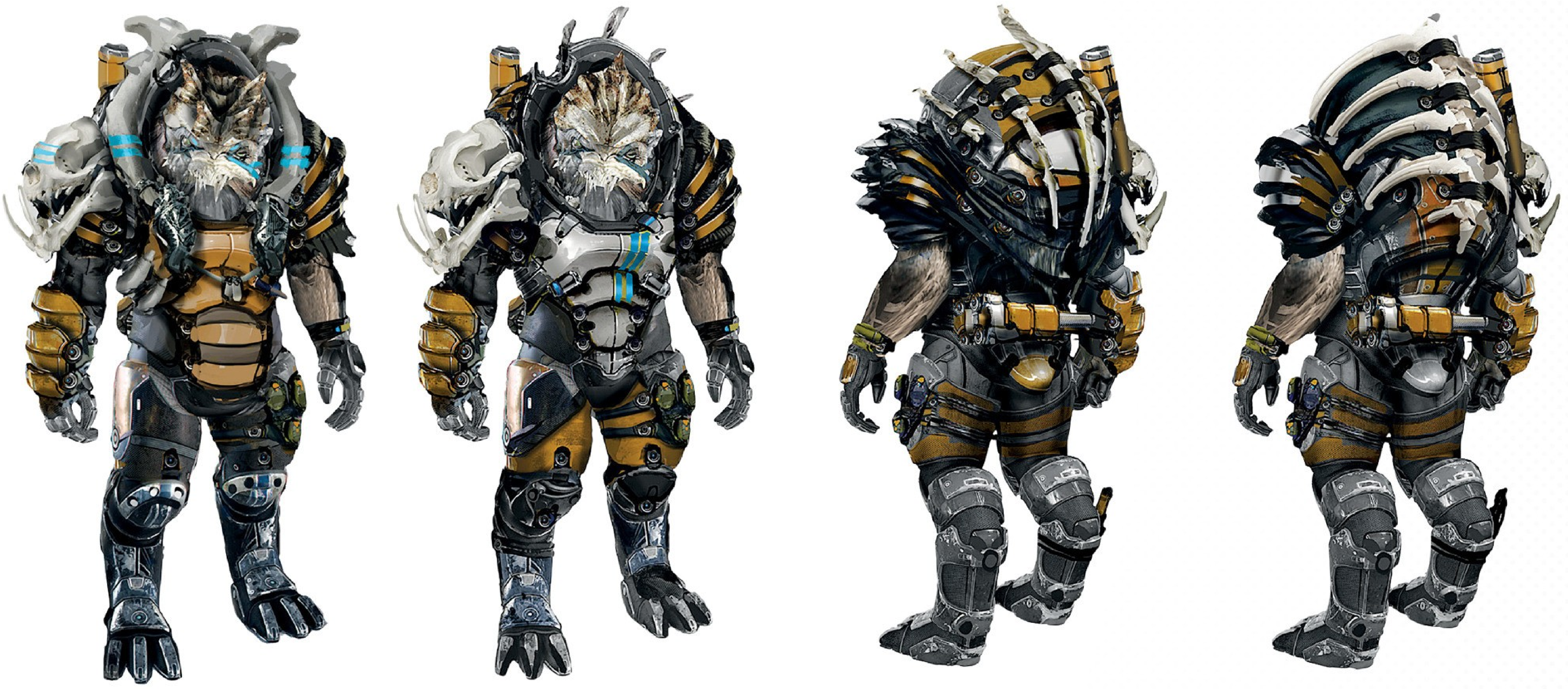


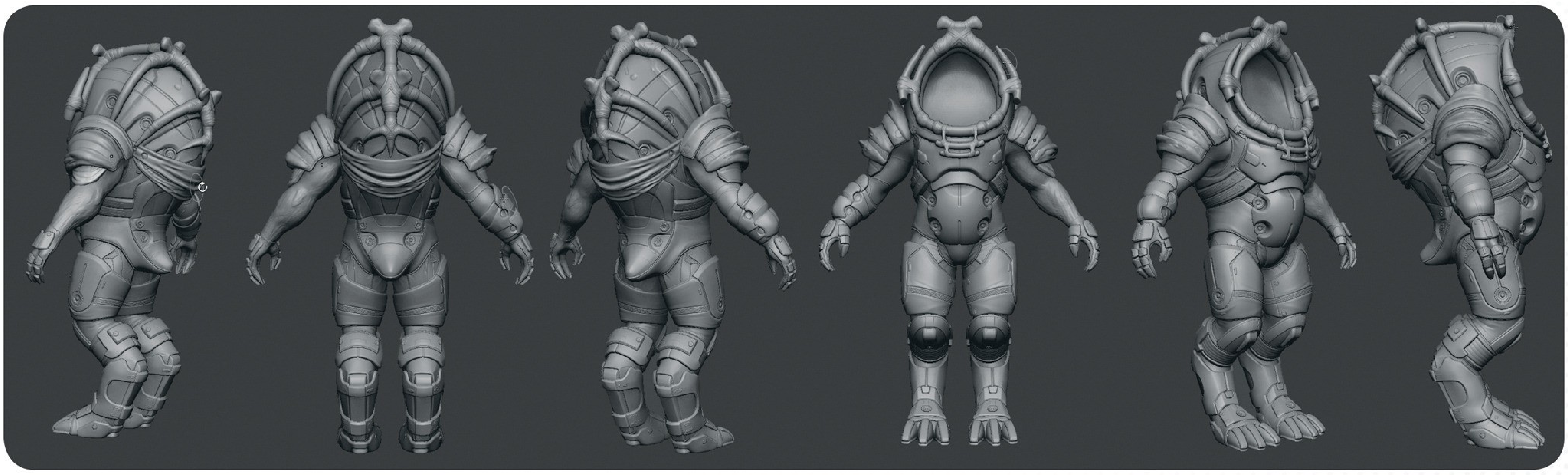


Joseph Botardo: Nakmor Drack is my favorite of the work I did for *Mass Effect: Andromeda*. He was challenging, but I'm mostly happy with the result. It was a struggle to get the fat belly that we wanted while working under the constraints of animation and rigging. I really like how the bone contrasts the metal armor, a sort of organic vs. inorganic.









PELESSARIA B'SAYLE

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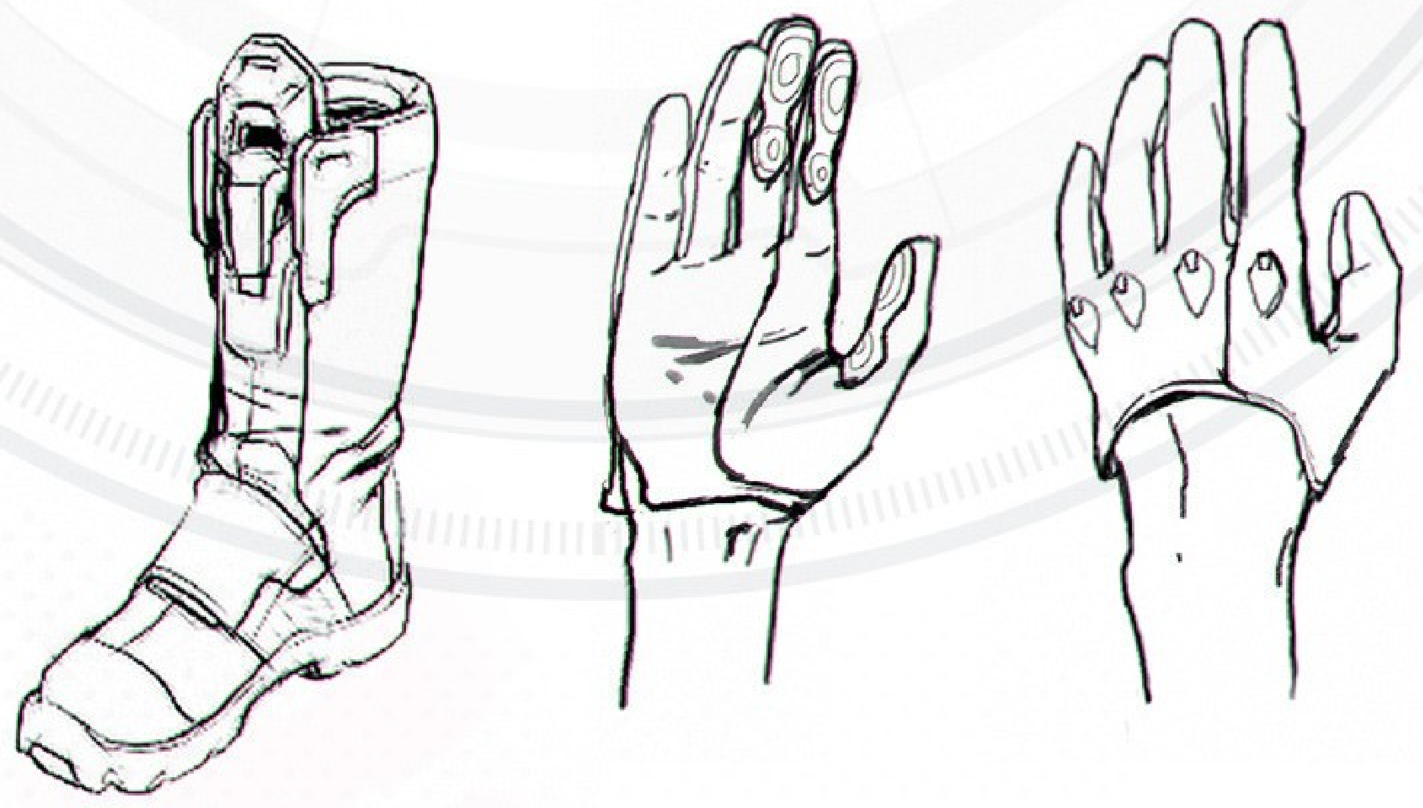
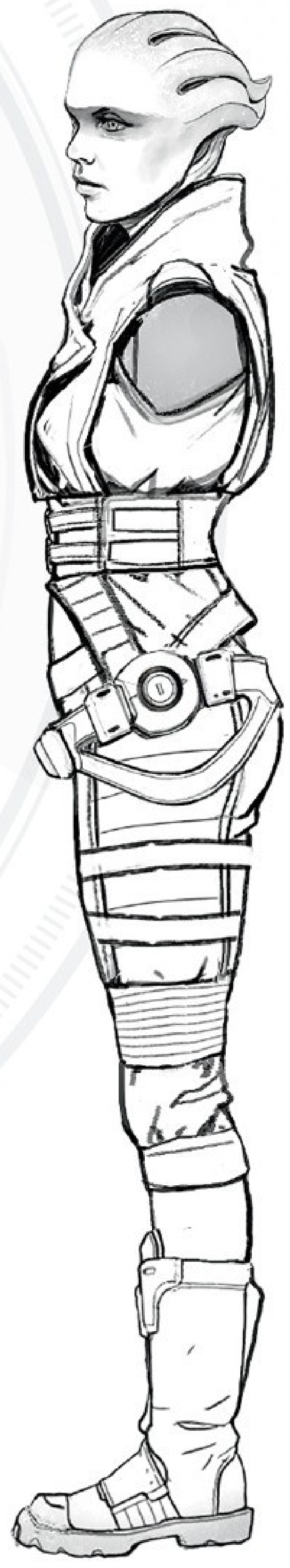
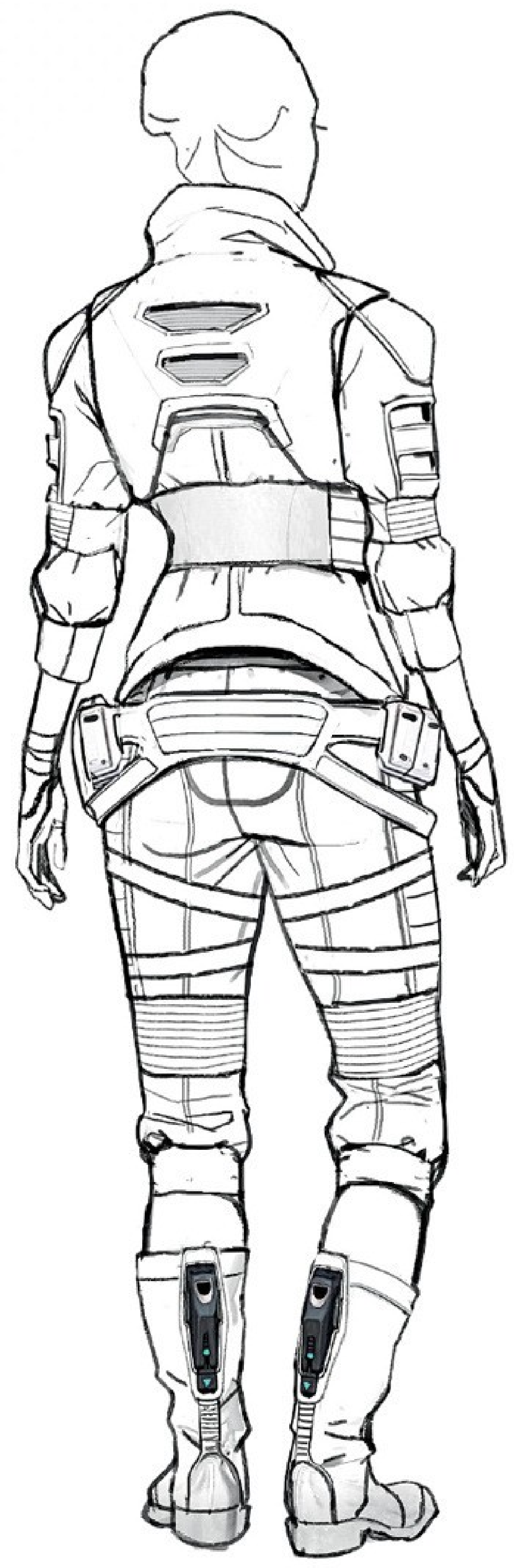
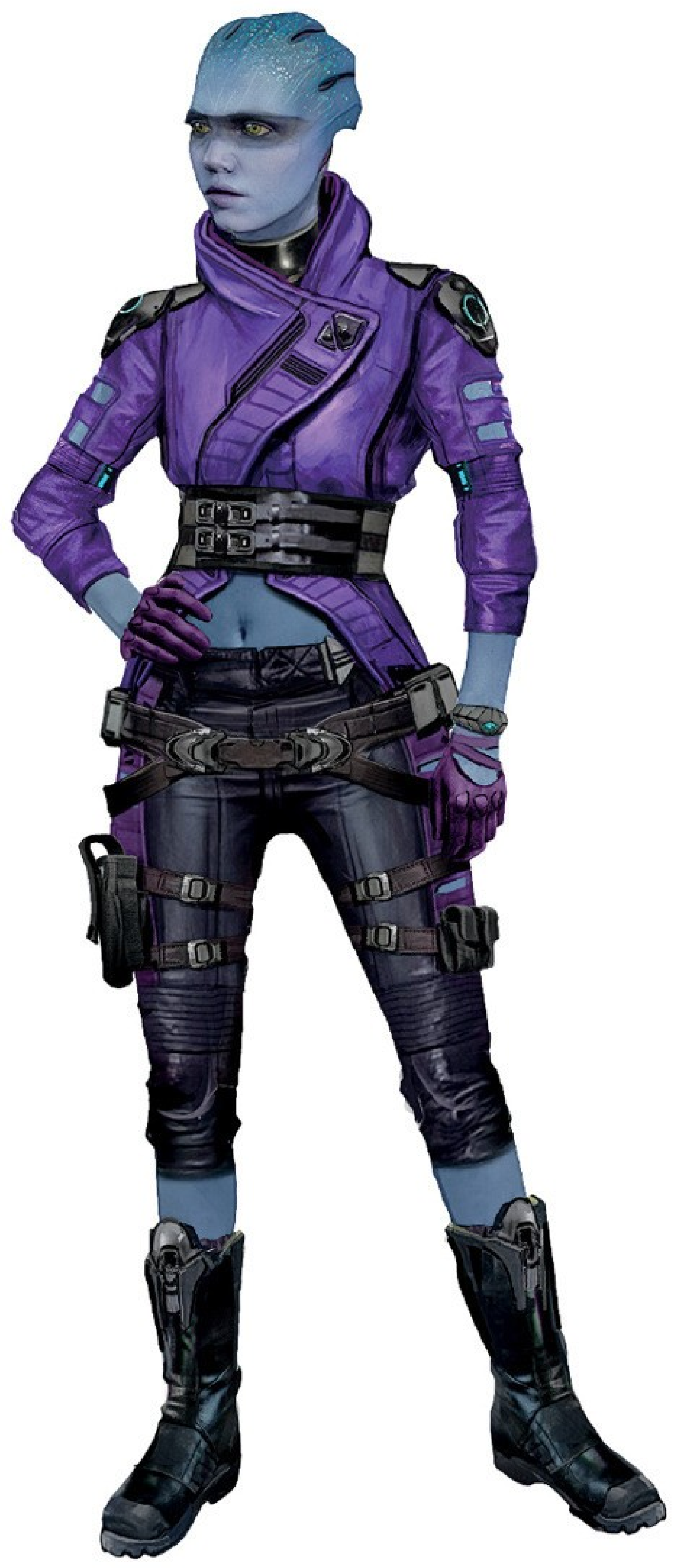
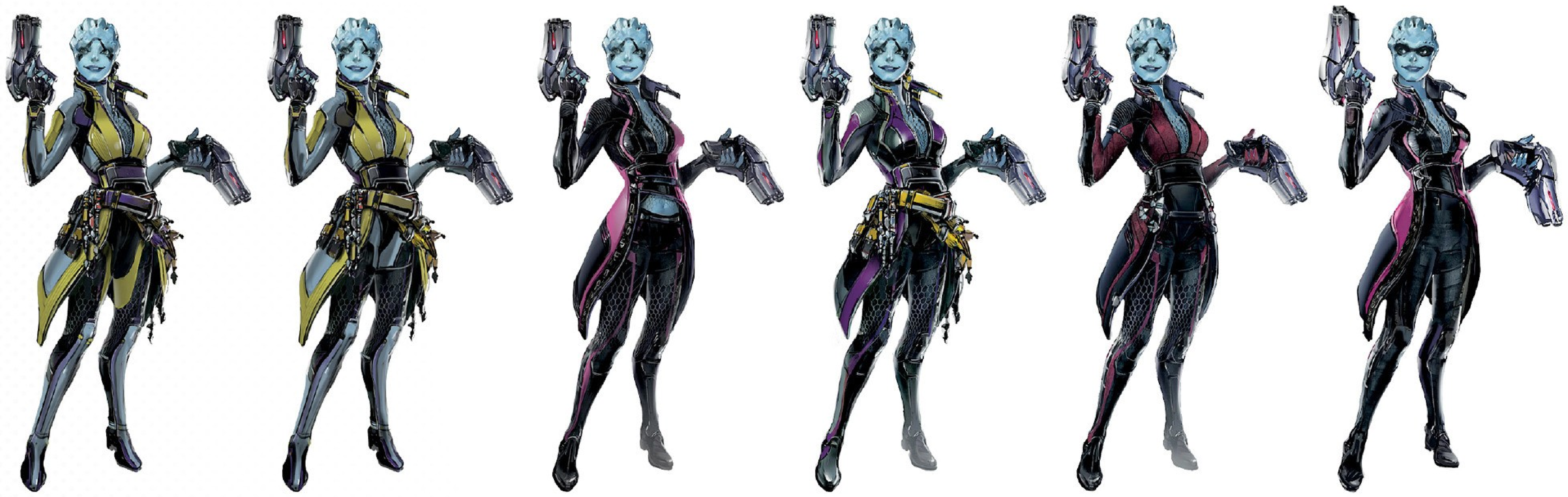
Ramil Sunga: Peebee was a really fun character to work on. She is a very untraditional type of asari, which brings its fair share of challenges. She's a thrill-seeking young adventurer who is quickly maturing. Her look is very unconventional and a lot more casual than other asari. That look was hard to nail, from going too far off the asari palette, which didn't seem believable, to designs that did not take it far enough. I worked closely with the art director, Joel. He had a very interesting take on her look, and I think that comes across nicely.

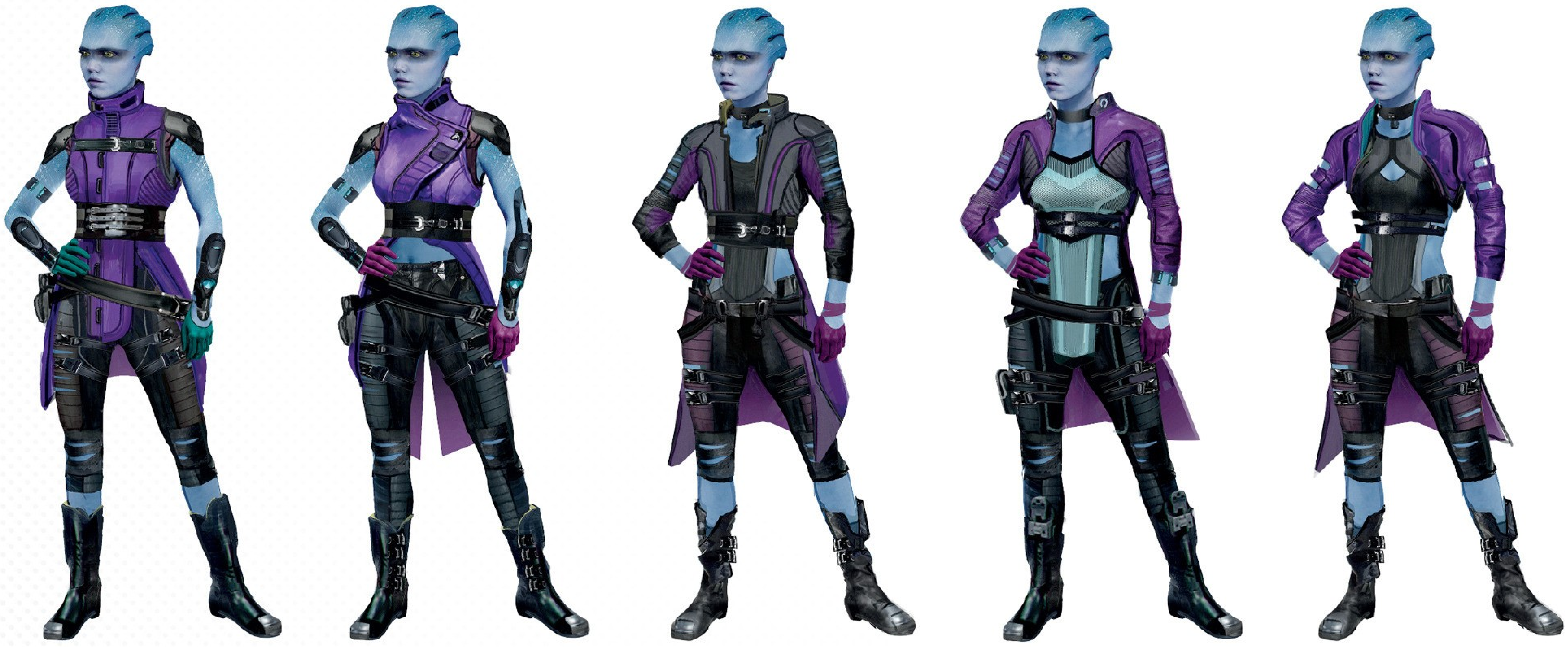


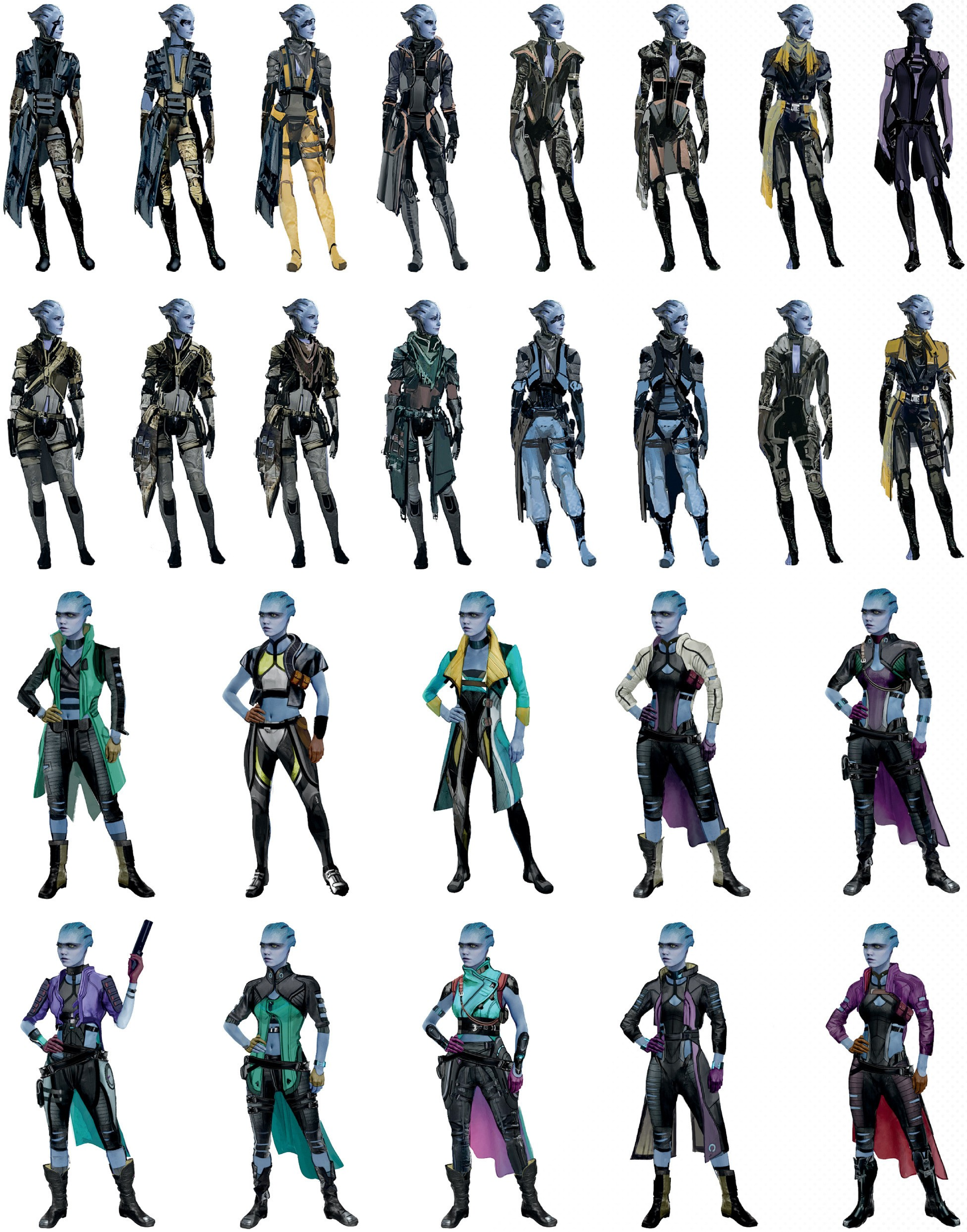












HL: Developing Peebee was a huge challenge. Fans of the *Mass Effect* trilogy—including me—love Liara, so it was quite a task to create an asari that could hold a candle to Liara in terms of personality and attractiveness. We went in a different direction with Peebee—who is younger and far quirkier than Liara—and I think the end result conveys her personality perfectly.

VETRA NYX

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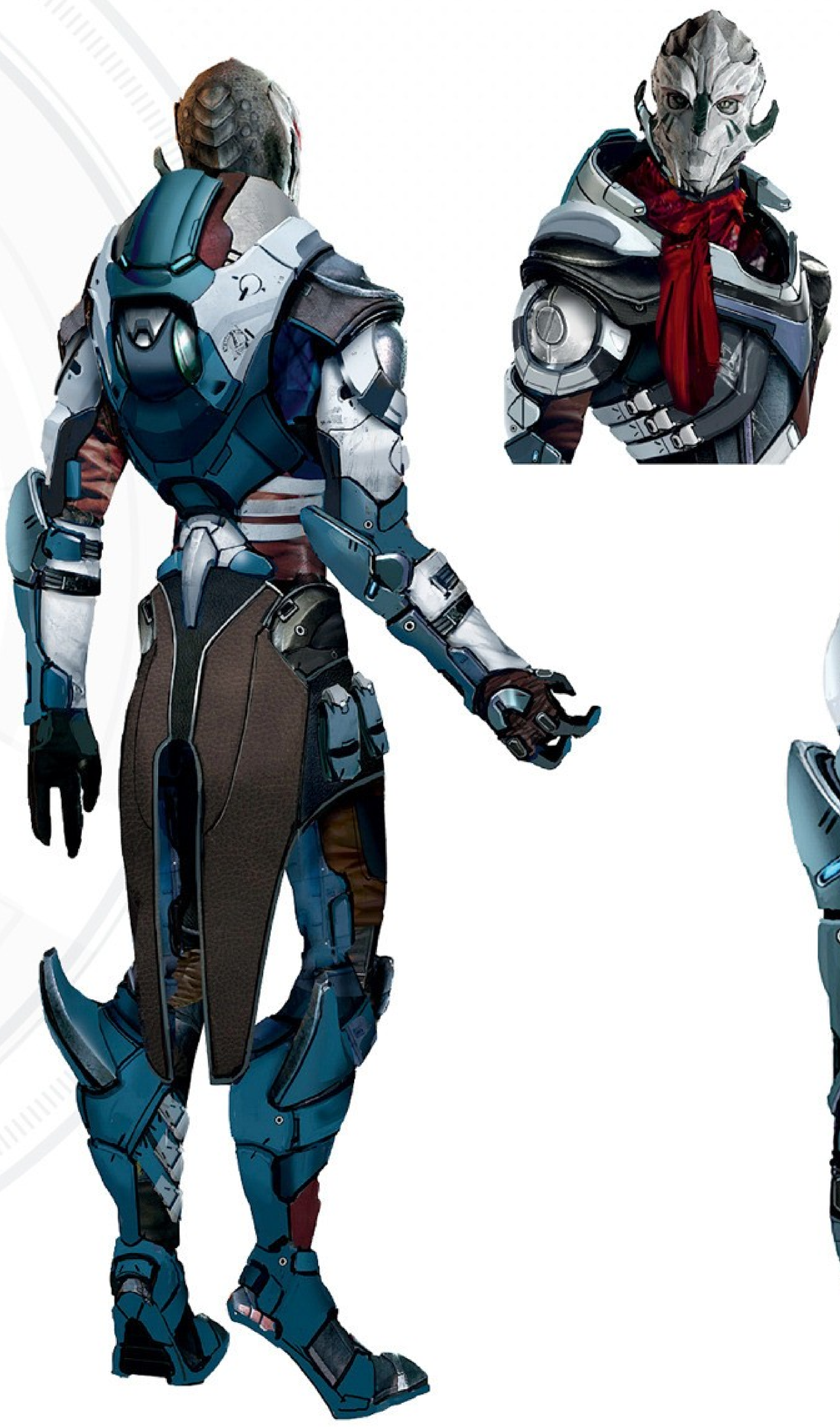
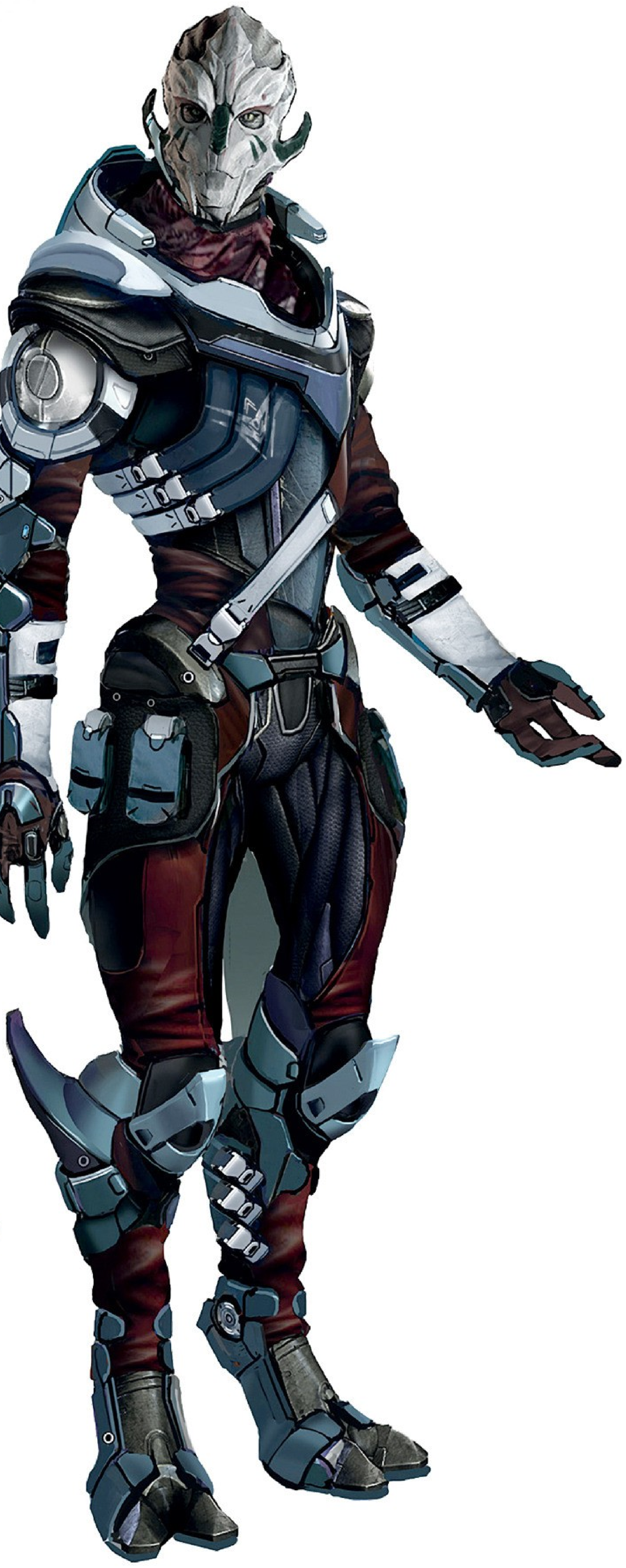
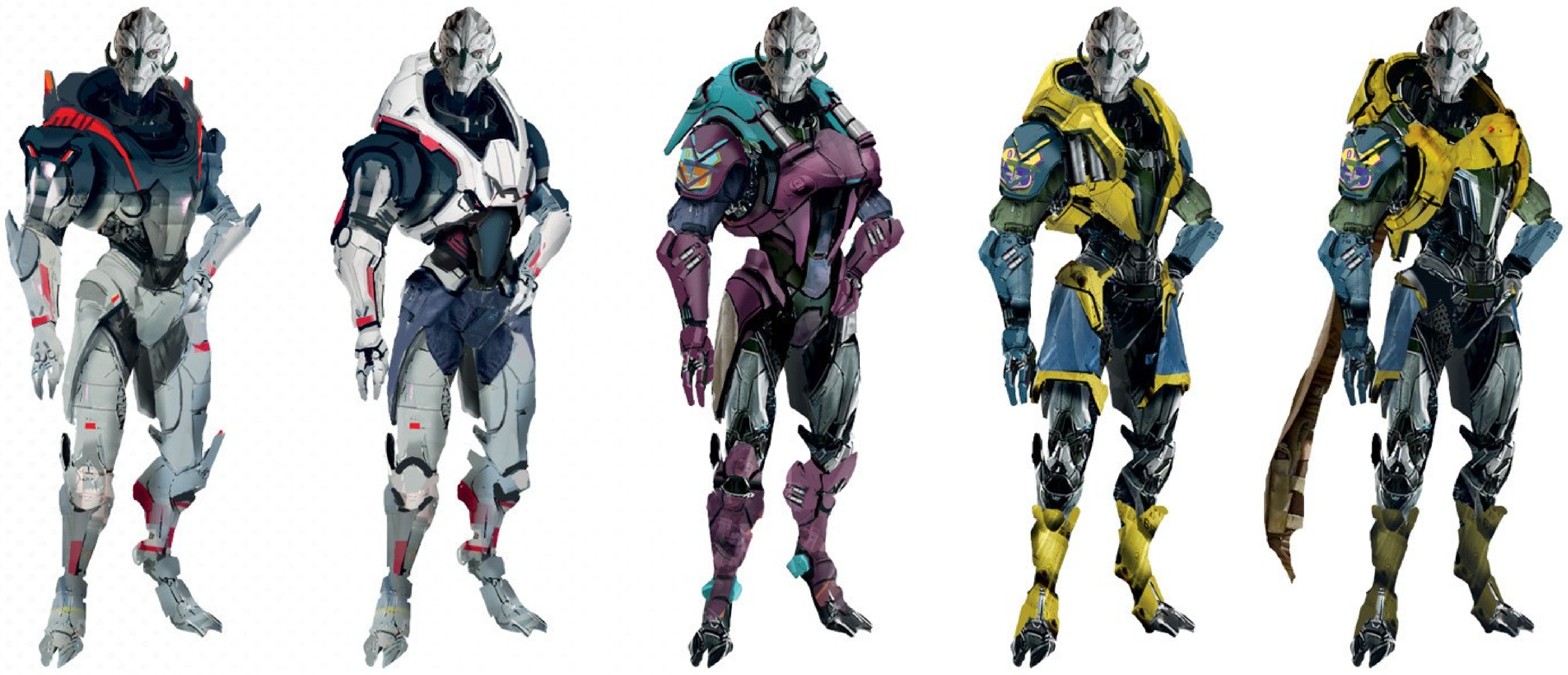
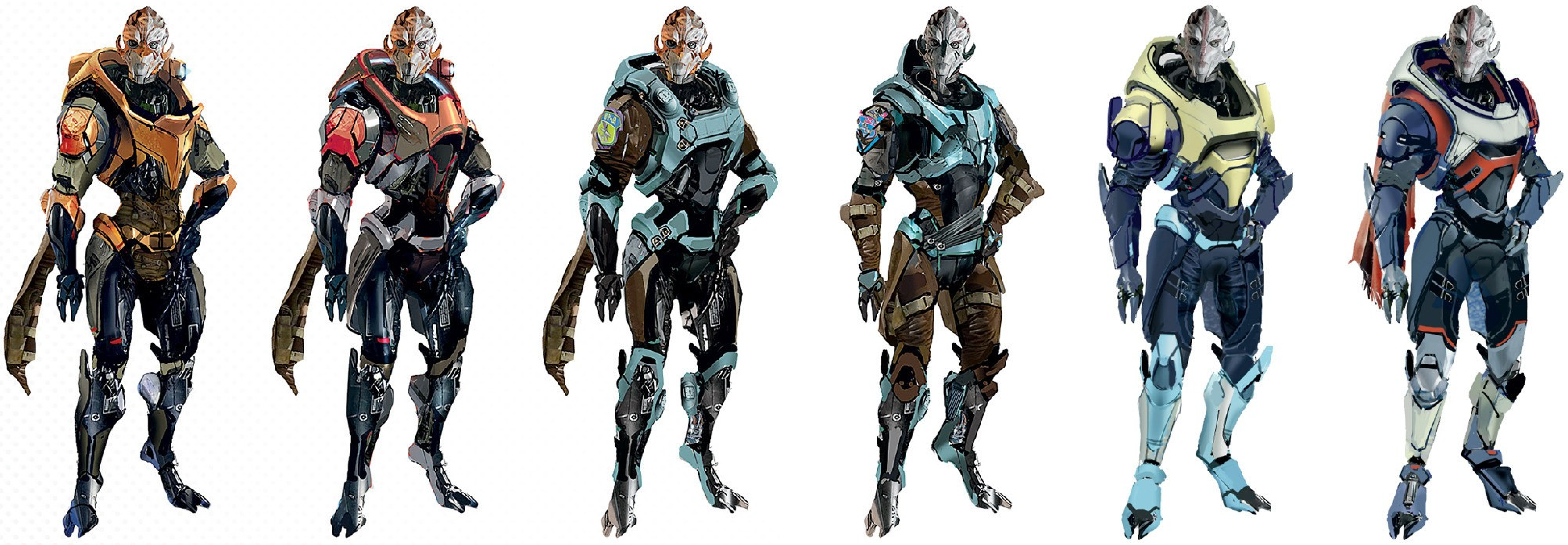
BL: Vetra was a unique challenge, since we have not really explored female turians, with the notable exception of Nyreen in the *Mass Effect 3: Omega* downloadable content. We started from scratch, and then built her up with the basic turian shapes, angles, and stripes. Once her frame was established, we built up her exosuit to round things off.

She was much bulkier in the beginning, but we had to scale it back because many of the bigger armor pieces were clipping into one another. This is a tech art challenge that we had to fight with throughout the project with all the character work.





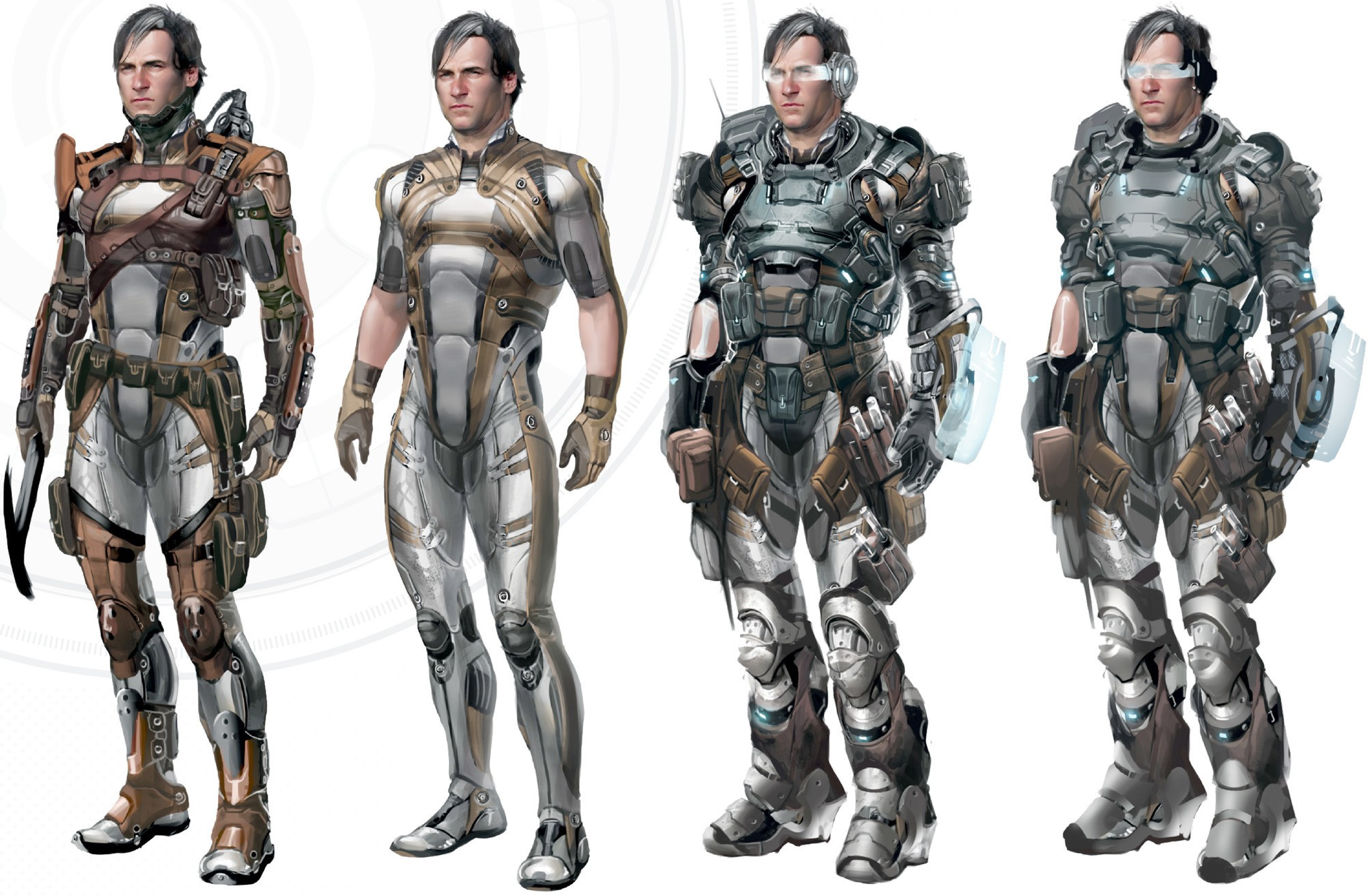


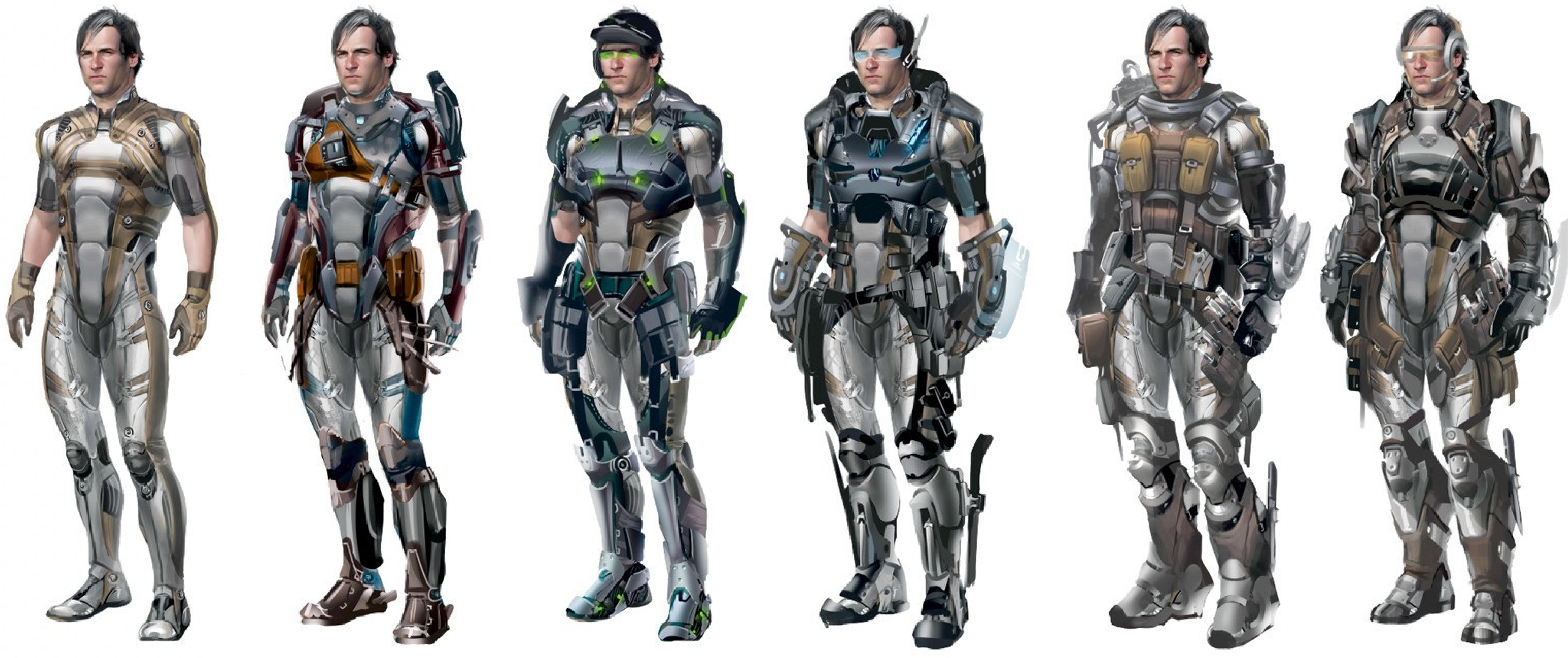


JB: Working on Vetra was a bittersweet process. I had a hard time connecting with the character while building her, but I was pleasantly surprised when I finally saw her in game. She looked way more badass than I expected when she was finally animated and voiced.

THE SQUAD

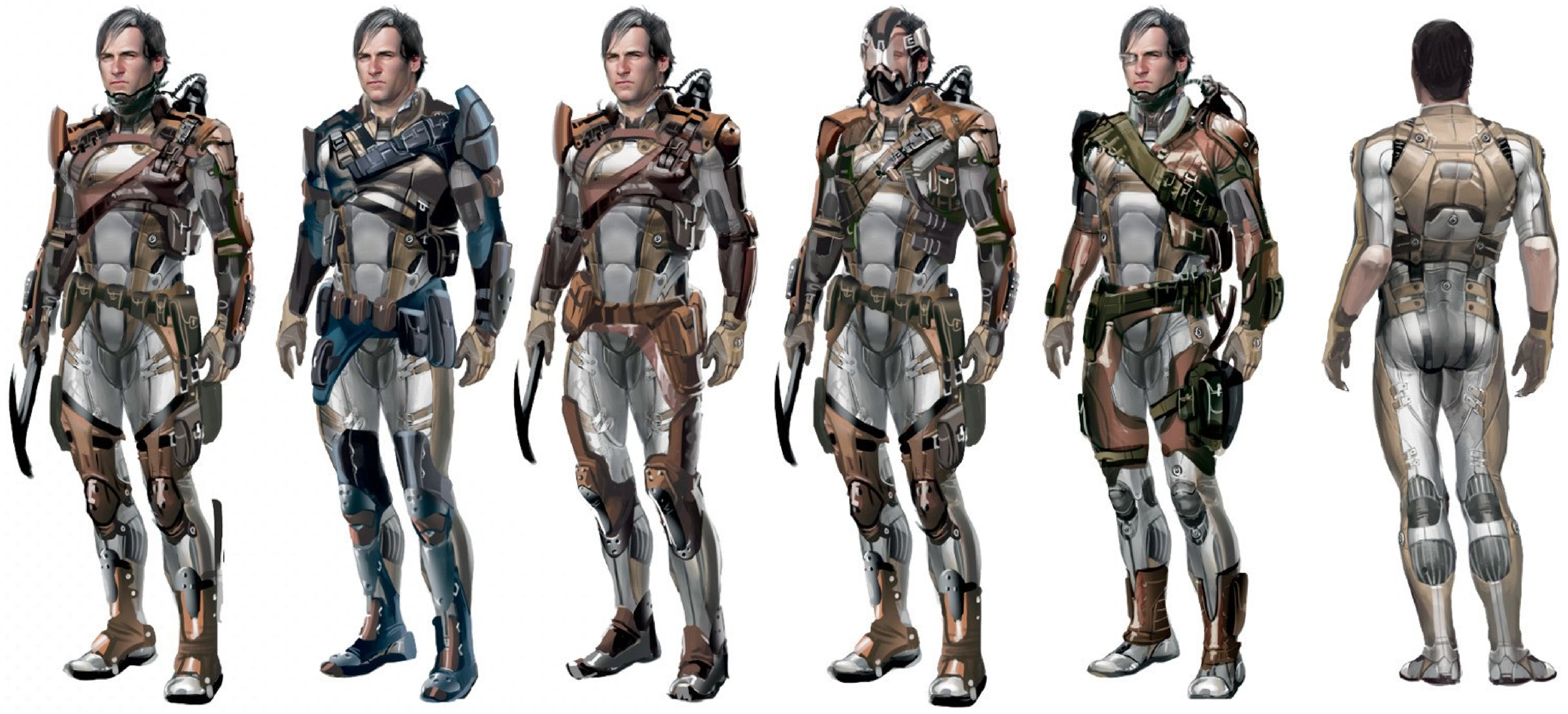
Joel MacMillan: The relationships built within the squad are arguably the most resonant and remarkable feature of the *Mass Effect* series. Each squad mate serves a valuable role both on and off the field, and the player's interactions with these characters are a large part of what makes each and every play-through a unique experience. Here we have the final in-game renders of all six squad members: Drack, Liam, Peebee, Cora, Vetra, and Jaal.

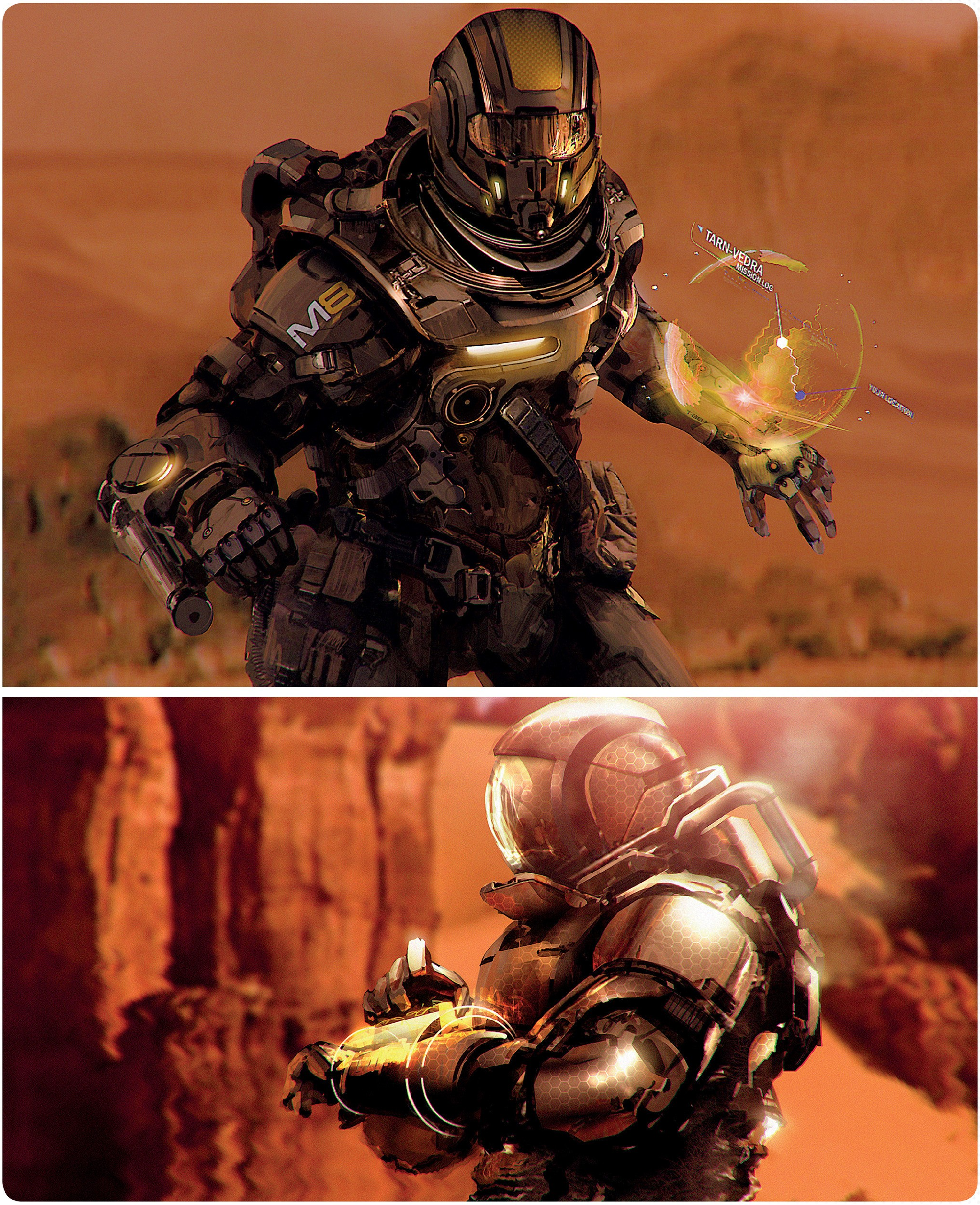




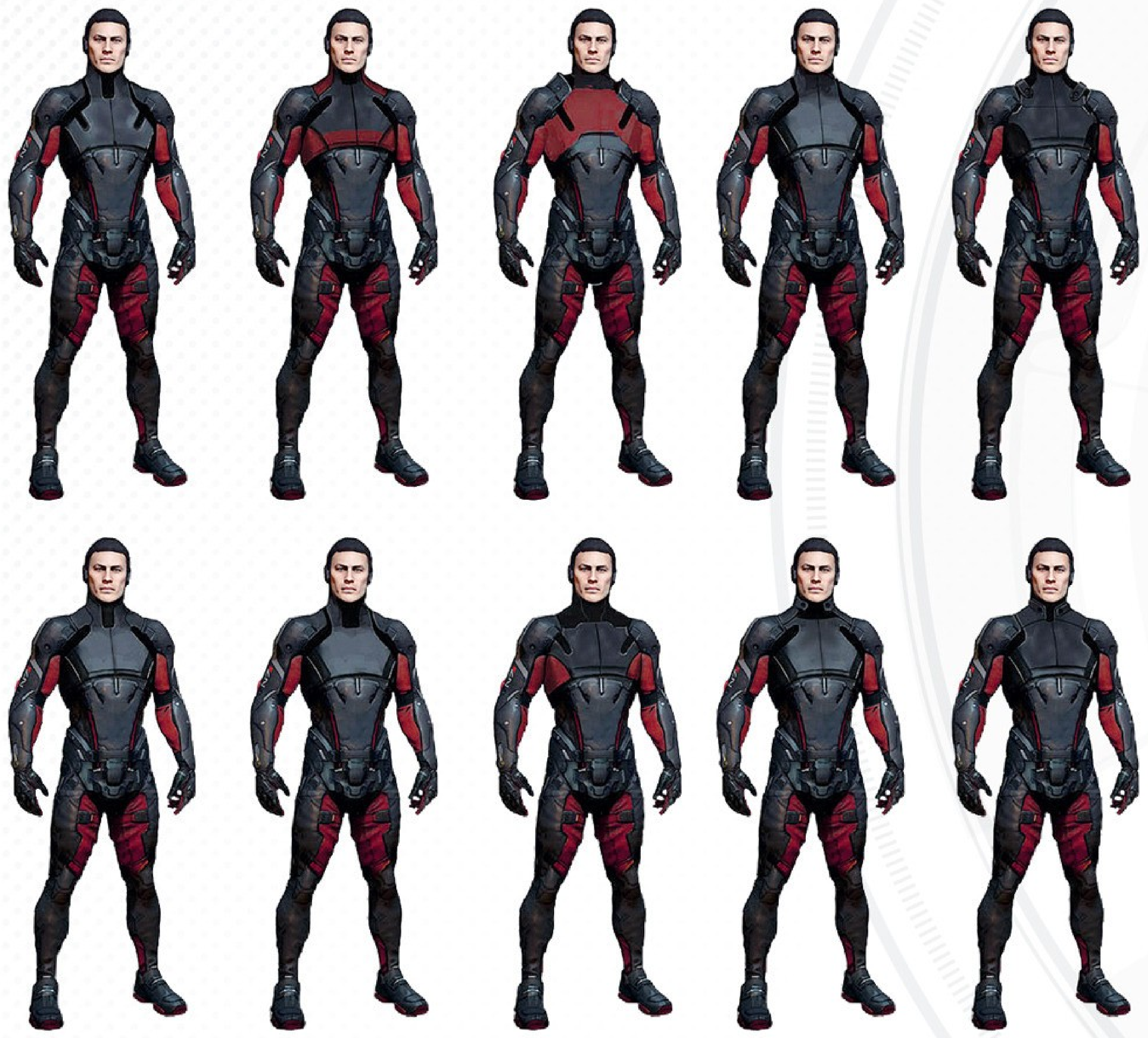
BS: These were some of the first ideas we were playing around with in the early concept phase of designing the Pathfinder. We were focusing our attention on creating more "tactile" elements while trying to integrate some new technologies with the suits. You can see some of these ideas represented in the melee tool on the right arm, and the scanning and information devices on the left arm.

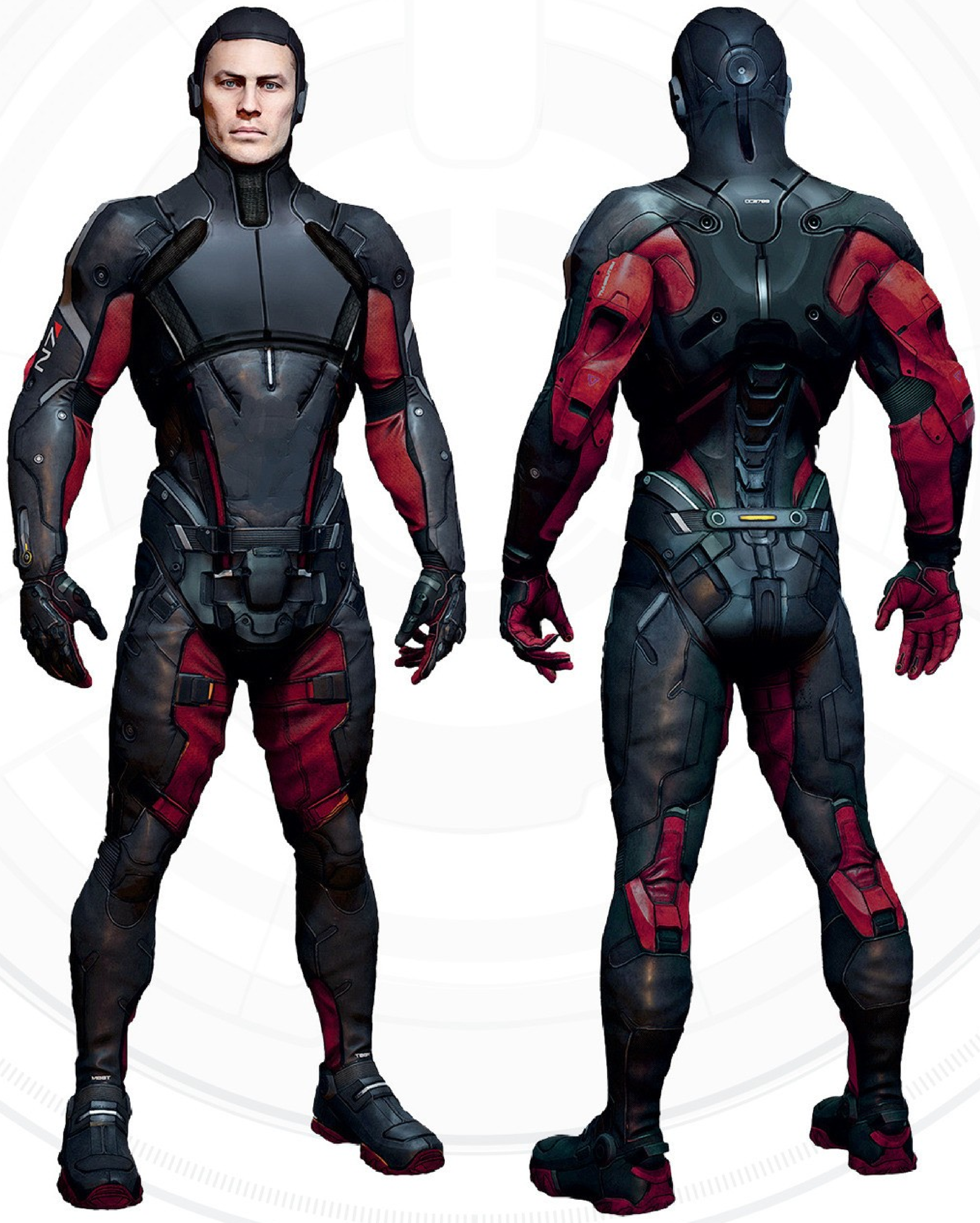
We wanted the Pathfinder to feel more like an explorer and less like the soldier that Shepard was. The images on the facing page were especially fun to do because there was more of an emphasis on an impression or feeling of a character rather than a straight-on full-body blueprint concept.



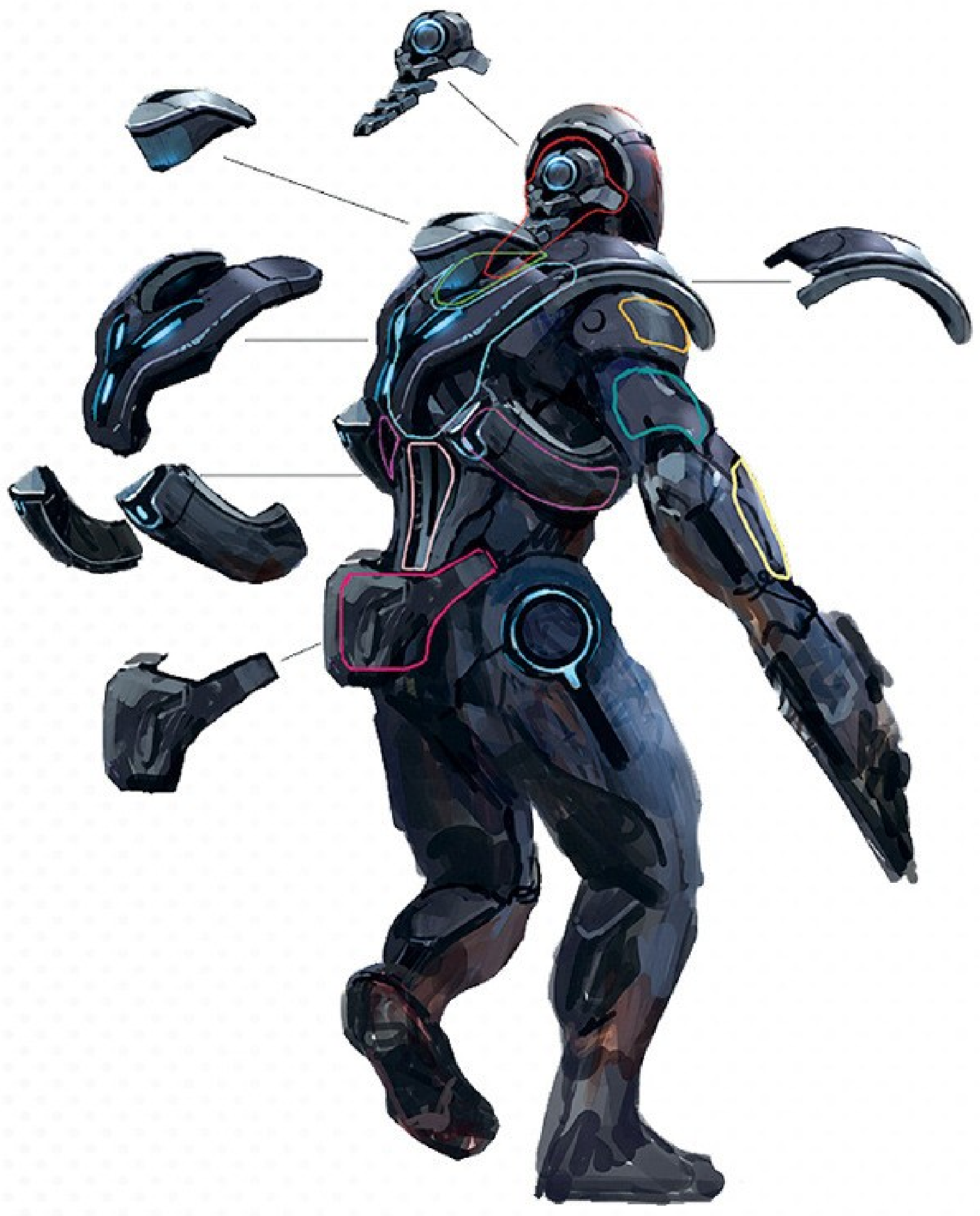

M8
TARN-VEDRA
MISSION LOG
YOUR LOCATION

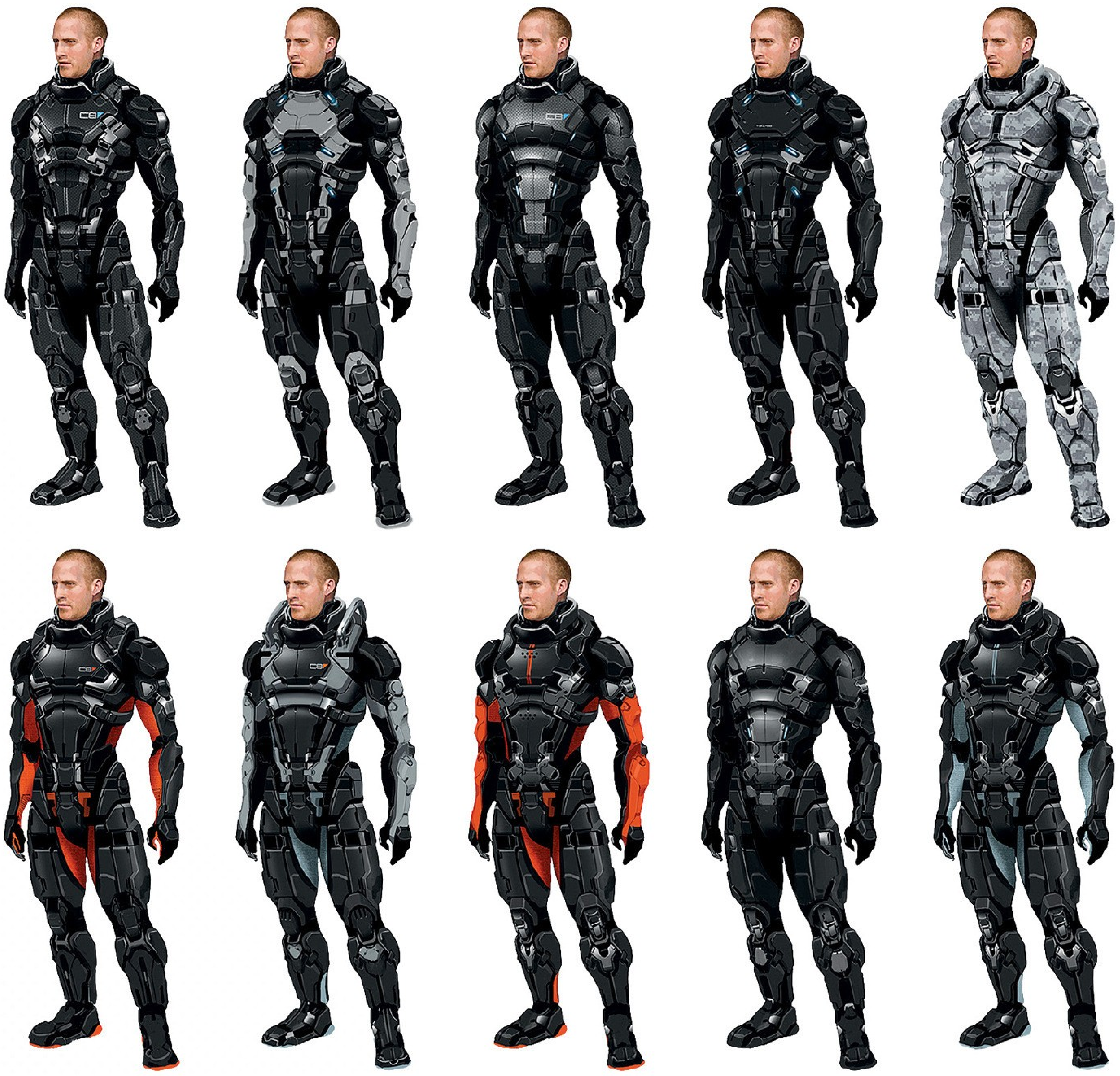
HL: These versions of the Pathfinder are closer to what we ended up with. There are a lot of things from the top image that made it into the final Pathfinder model, including the asymmetrical backpack.



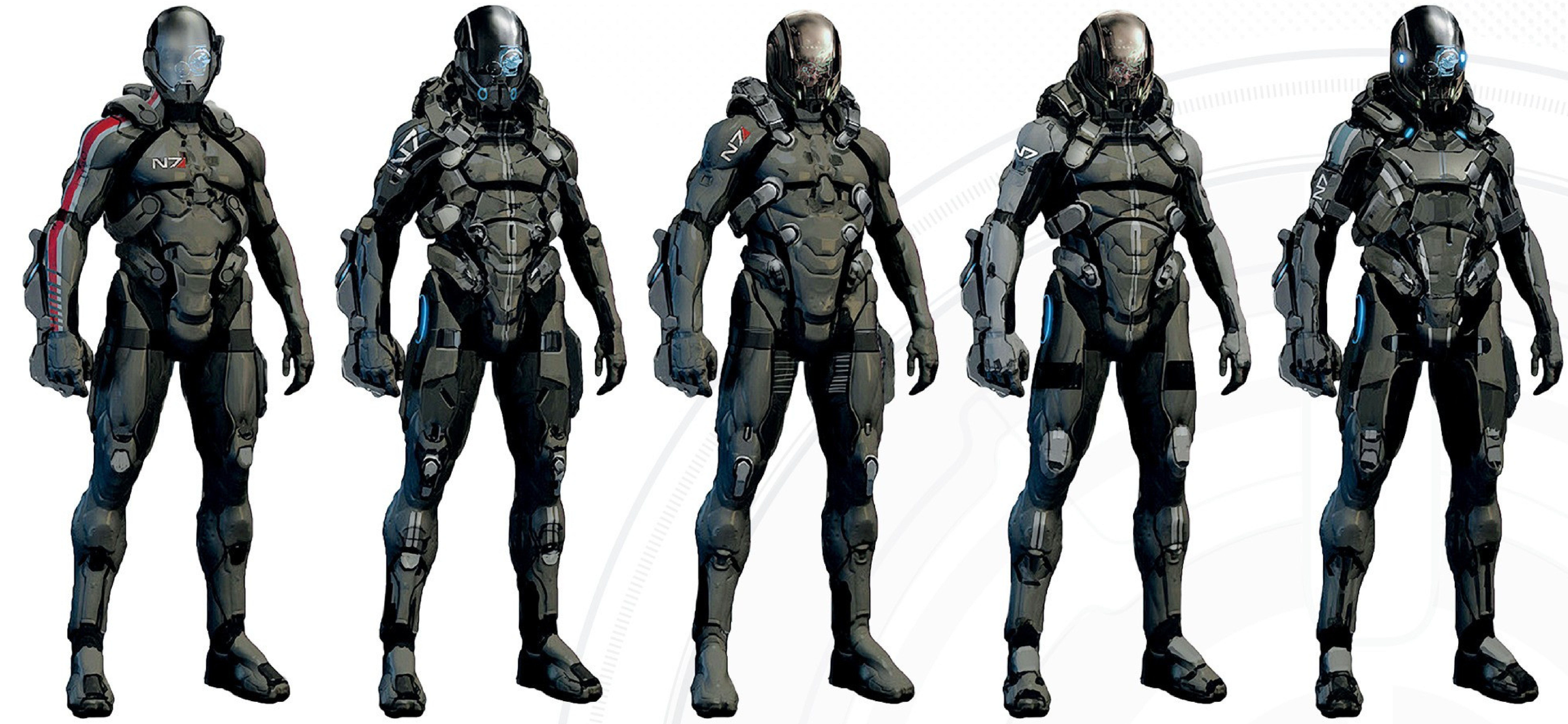


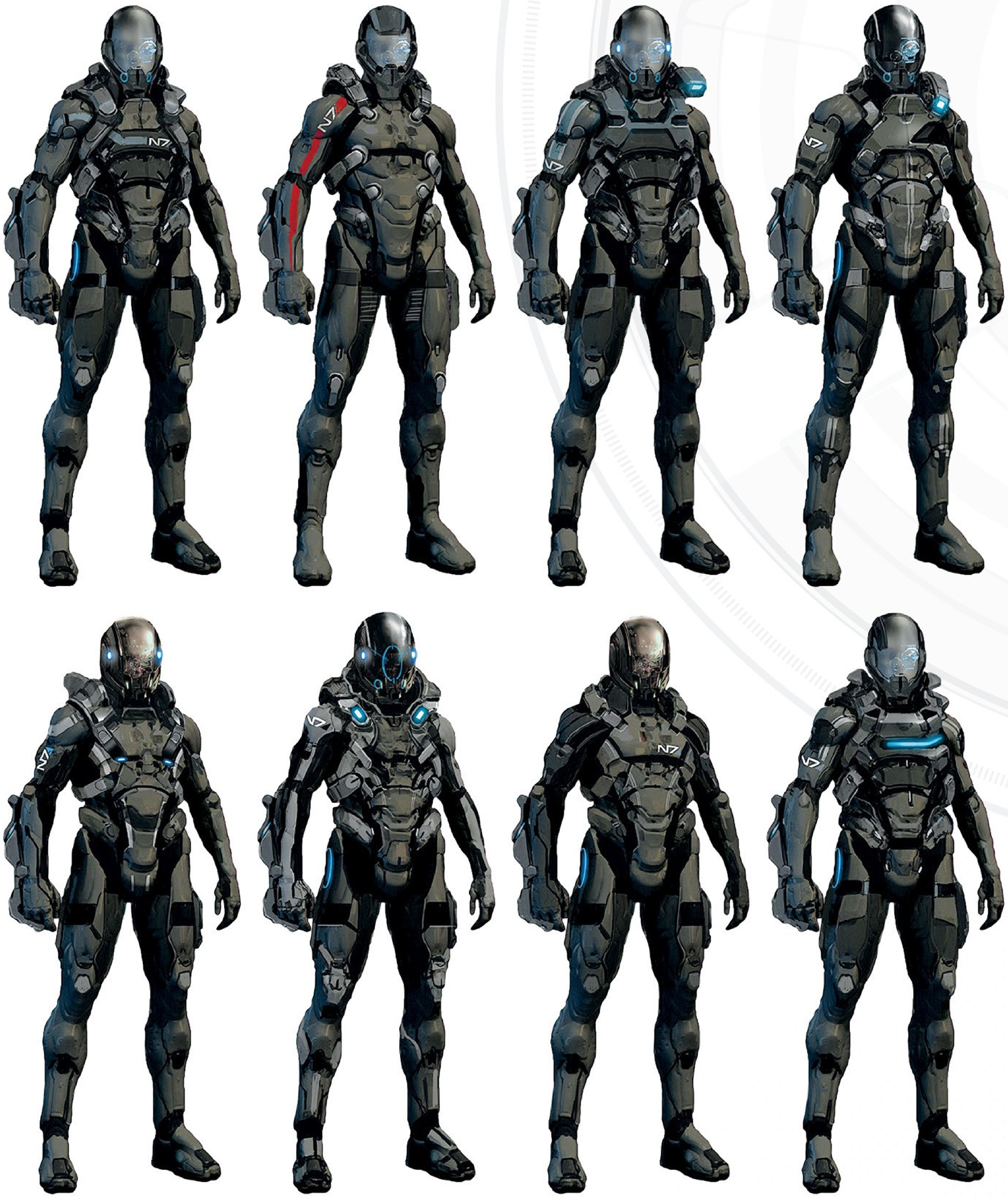
HL: The original trilogy had what we called "pajama armor," since we had to fix all the armor pieces onto a single piece of geometry. It was due to the limited number of polygons that we had on earlier consoles, so now that we have more power available to us we wanted to try something new for the *Andromeda* armor. We now have underarmor that sits closer to the body with interchangeable armor pieces that sit on top of it. This also allows us to limit the amount of stretching on the armor, avoiding the pajama effect.

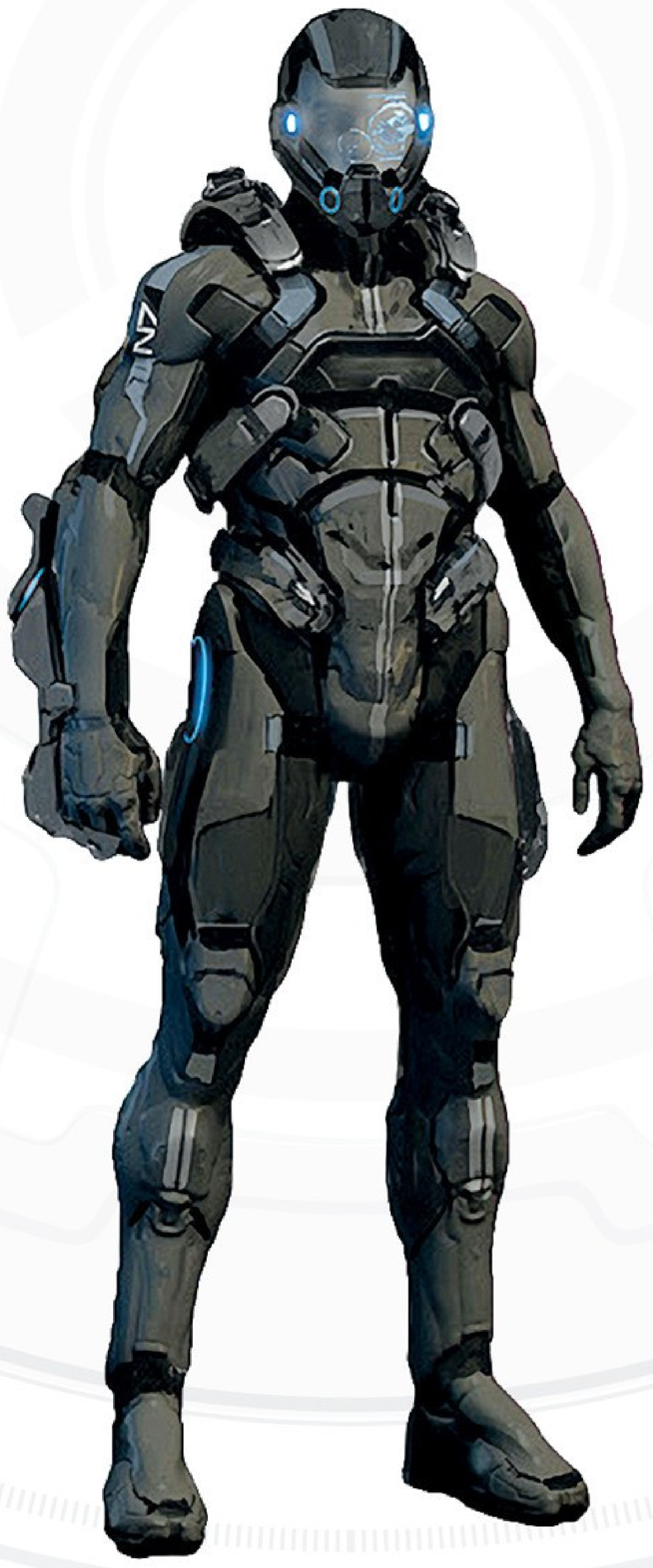




BS: One of the challenges we faced in designing the Pathfinder—along with all of our *Mass Effect* armor designs—was to provide a higher level of detail that was expected for next-gen content while retaining the clean simplicity that has been so iconic in the traditional *Mass Effect* style. As much as we wanted to detail the heck out of the design, we quickly realized that the more stuff we added, the more cluttered, and less sleek, the designs felt.

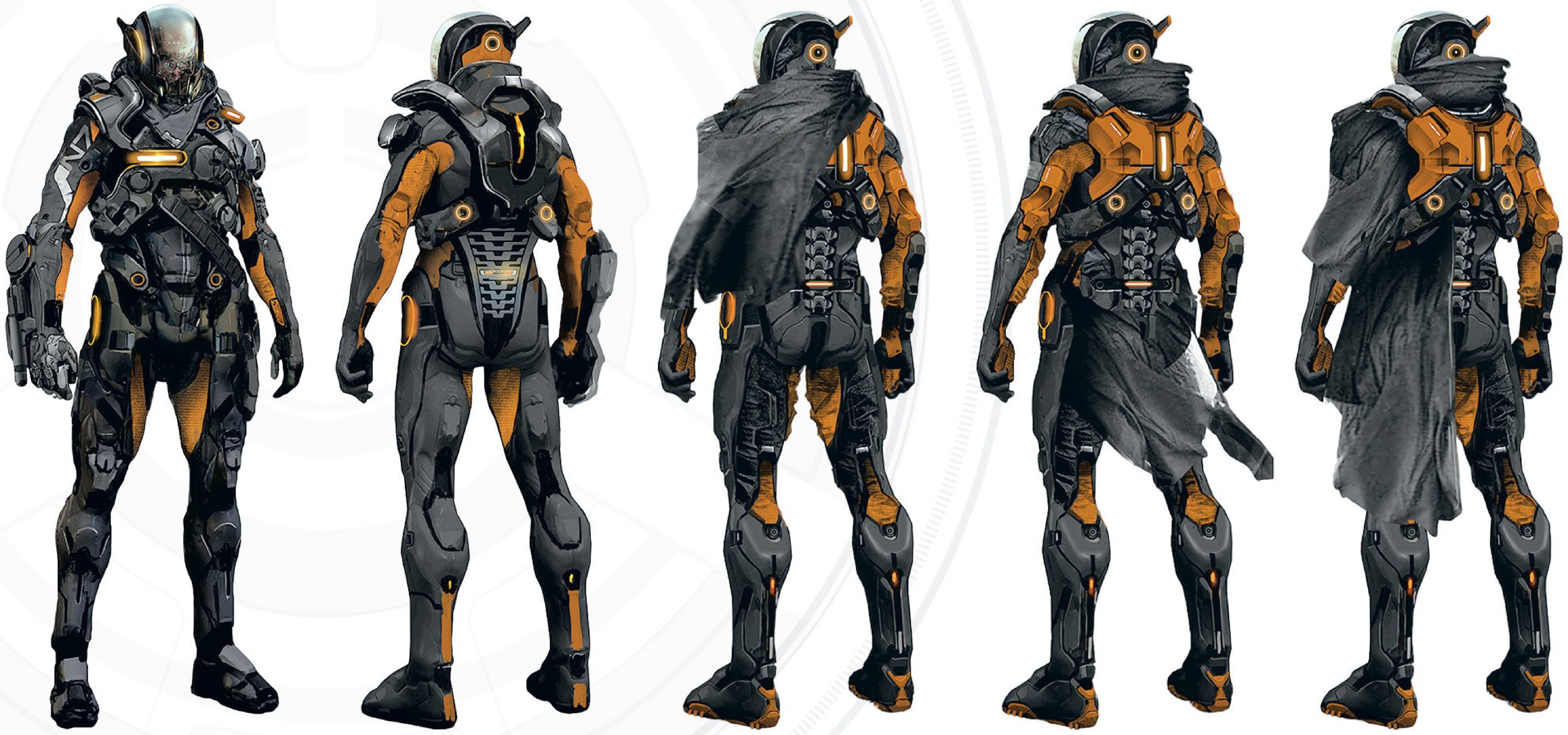


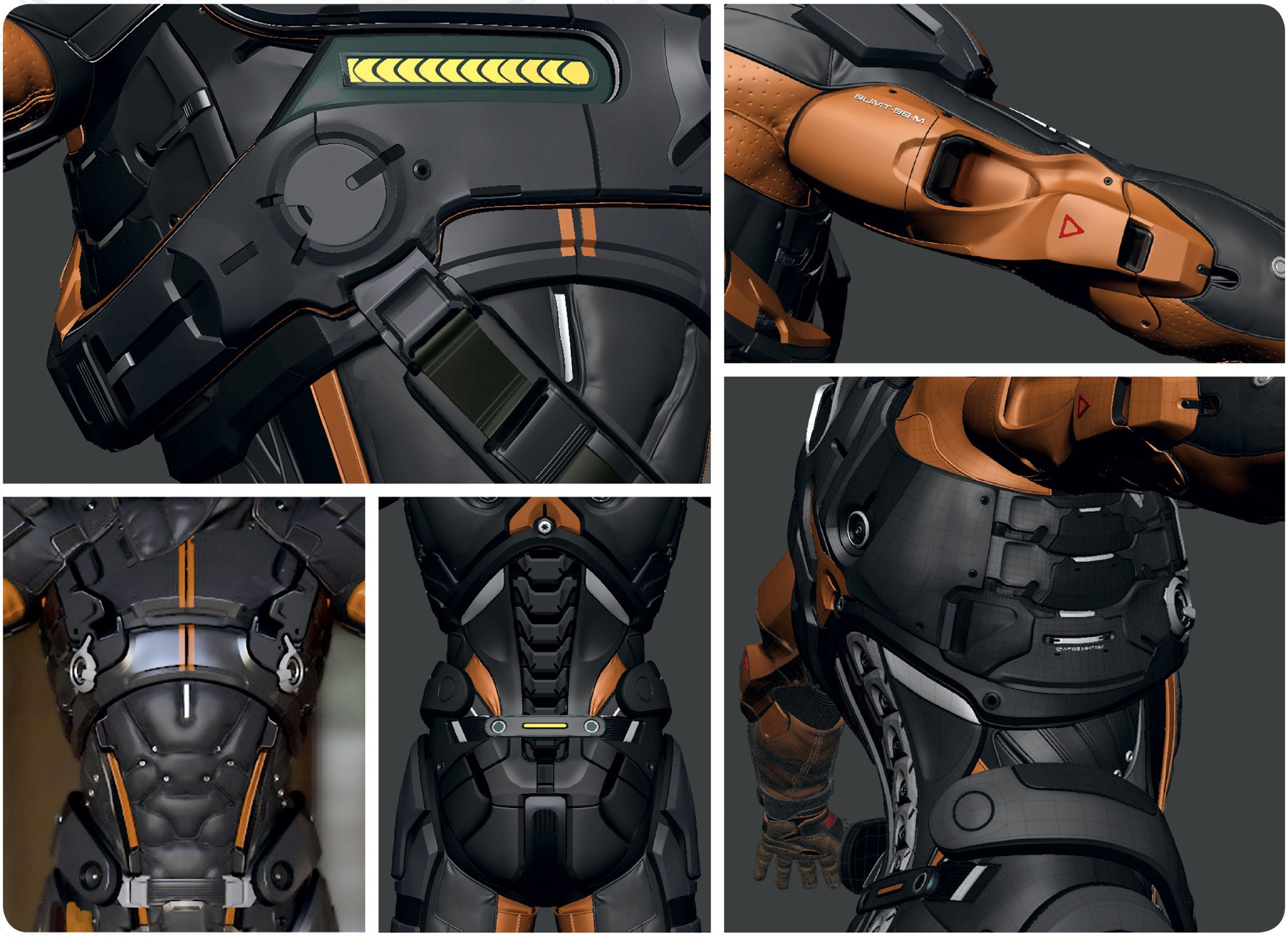




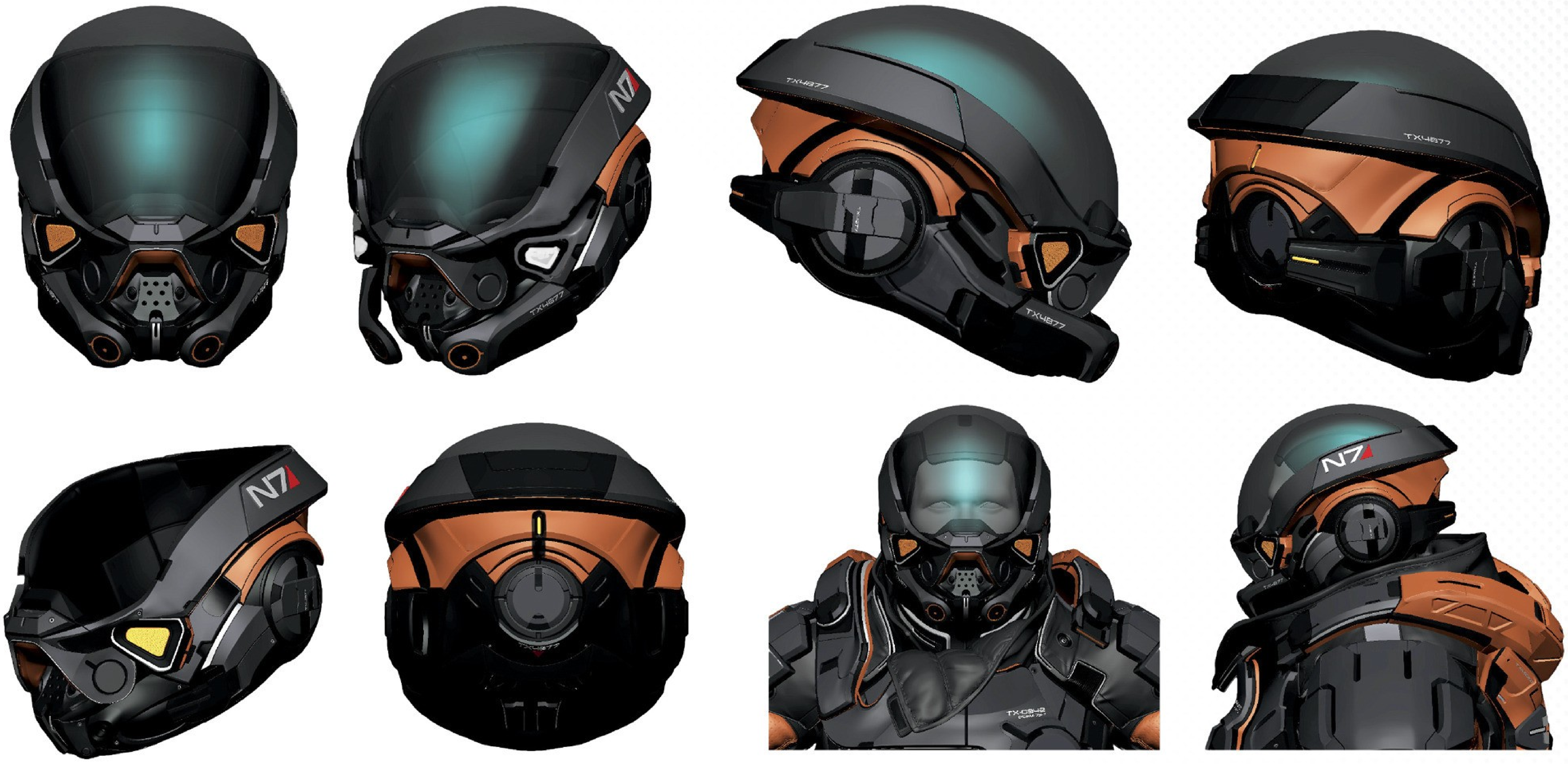
BS: In addition to the aversion to clutter, the fact that armor upgrades were to be integral to the Pathfinder armor made creating a nice balance of detail and sleekness a significant challenge.

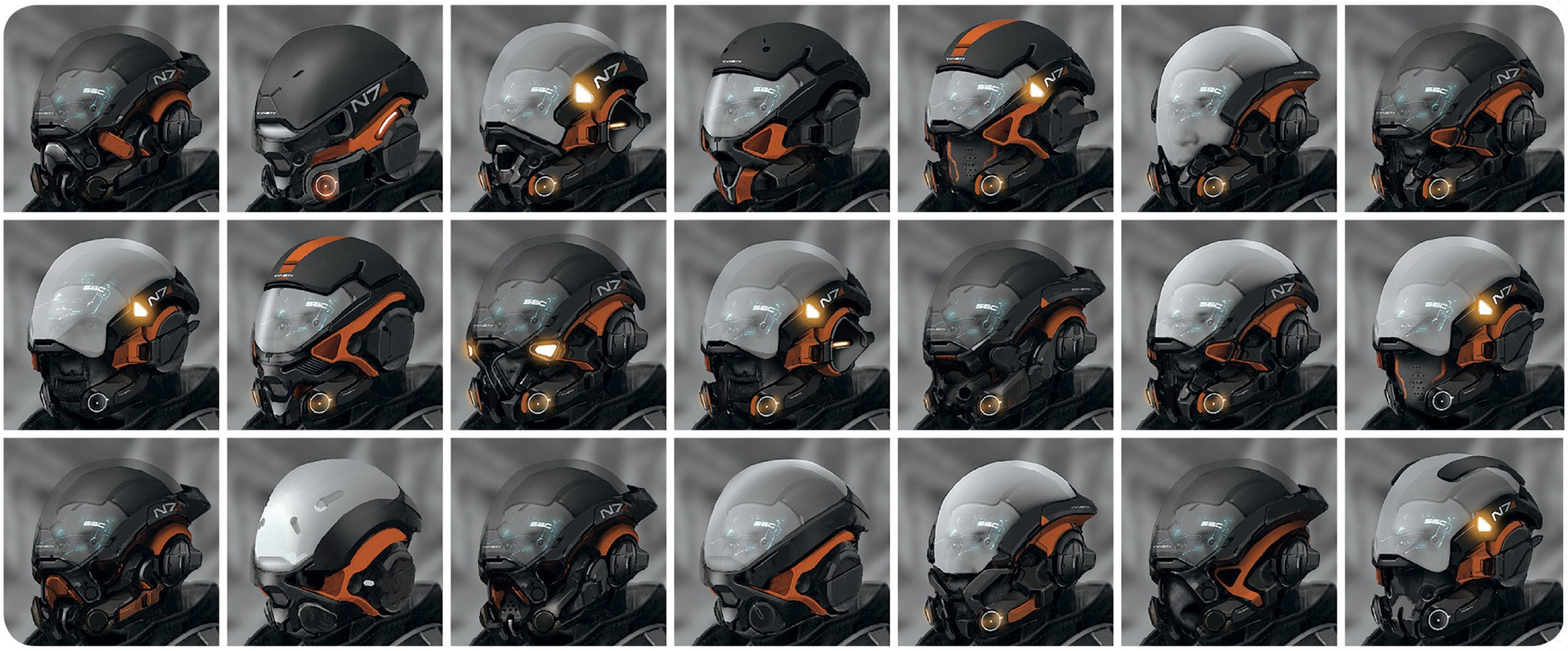
HL: These are early concepts for the Pathfinder armor. They're getting closer to their final look, and you can see the cues that we took from the classic armors from the original trilogy.

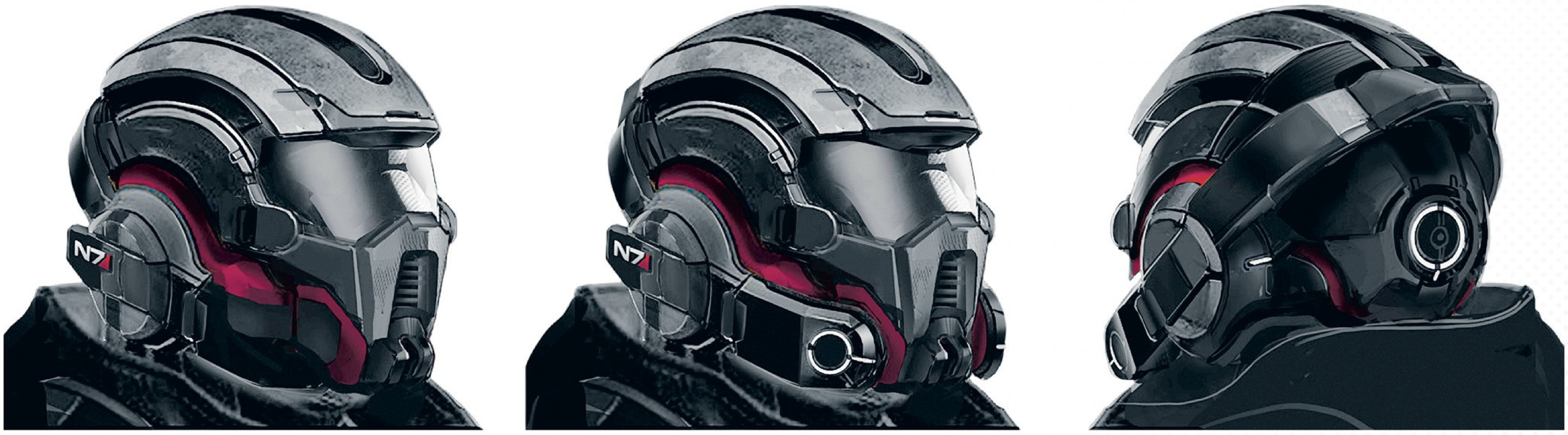




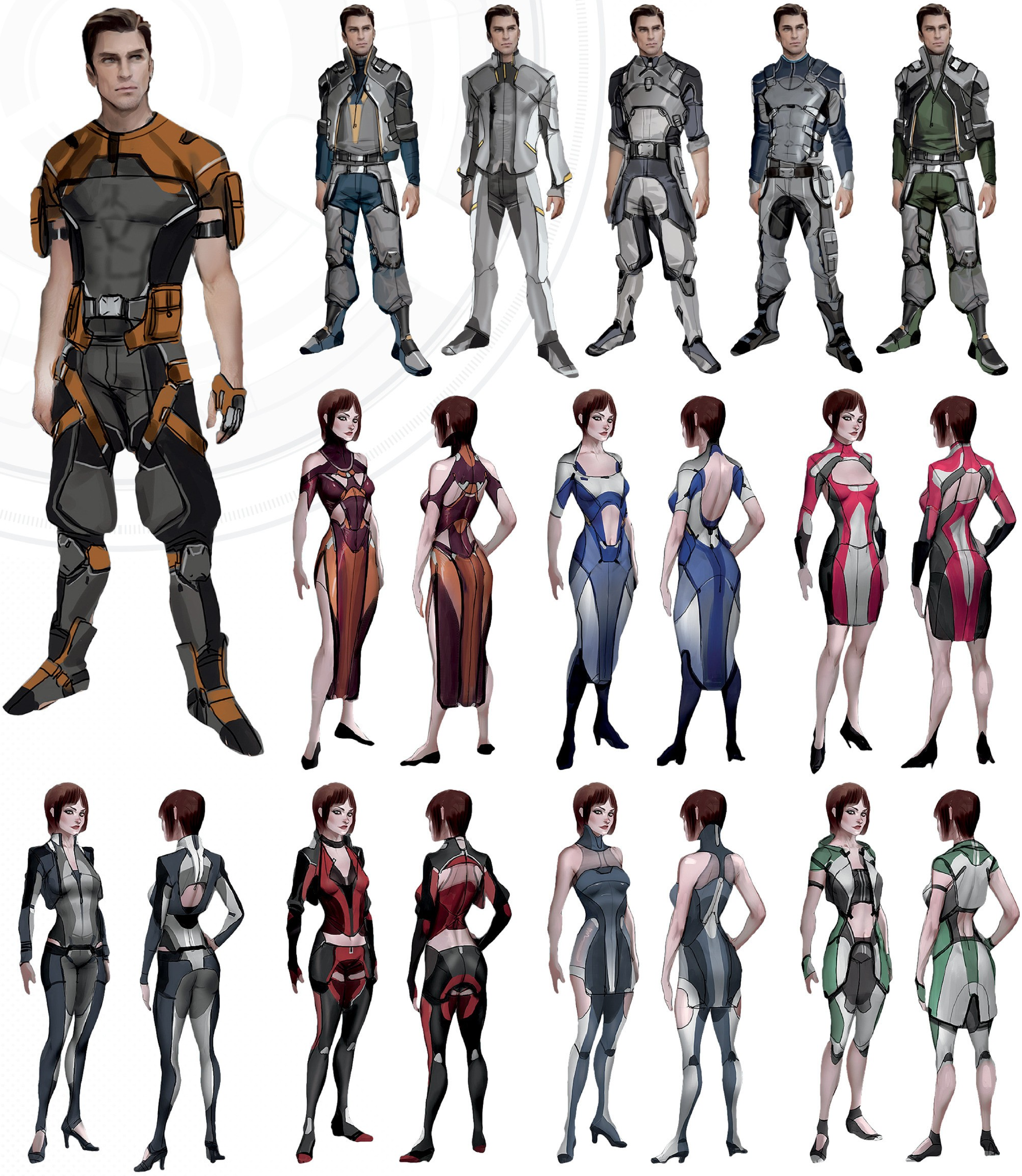
HL: This is the final Pathfinder armor concept. A few things are different here; for instance, the backpack and armor are now much more connected to the underarmor, and the cape has now been more fully integrated. We put a lot of consideration into creating this, since we wanted to make sure that we didn't miss a single detail. This piece, more than any other, required constant communication between the art director, concept artists, modelers, and animators.





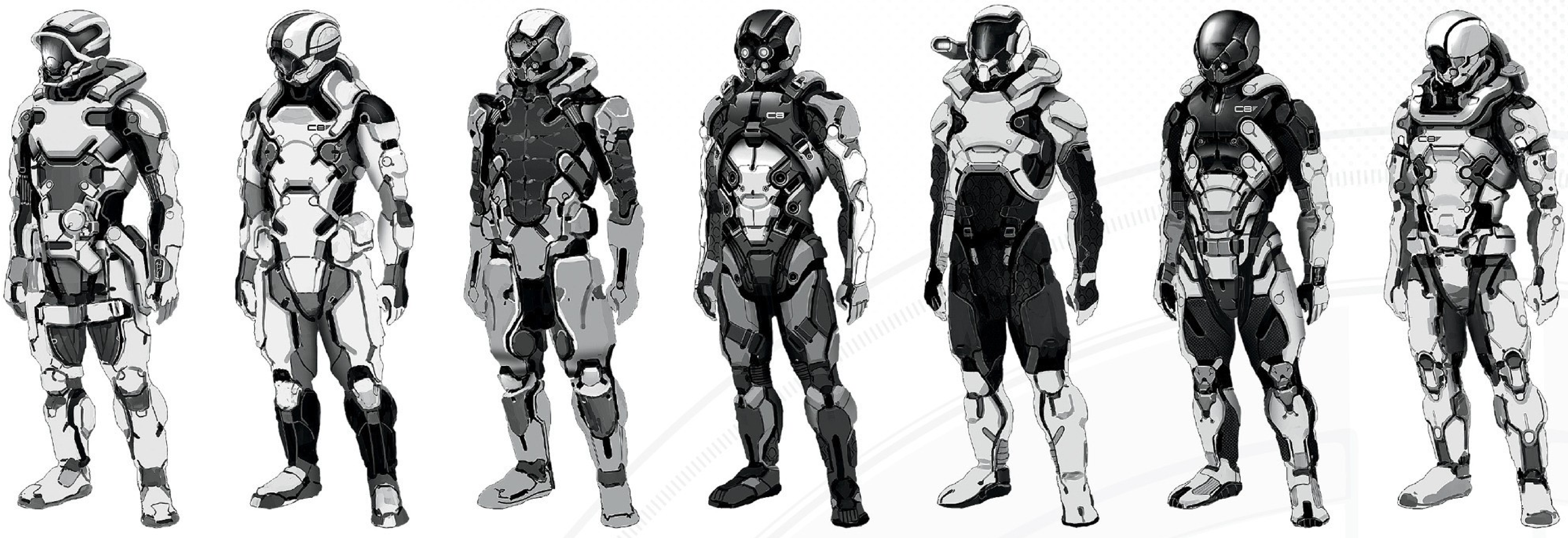


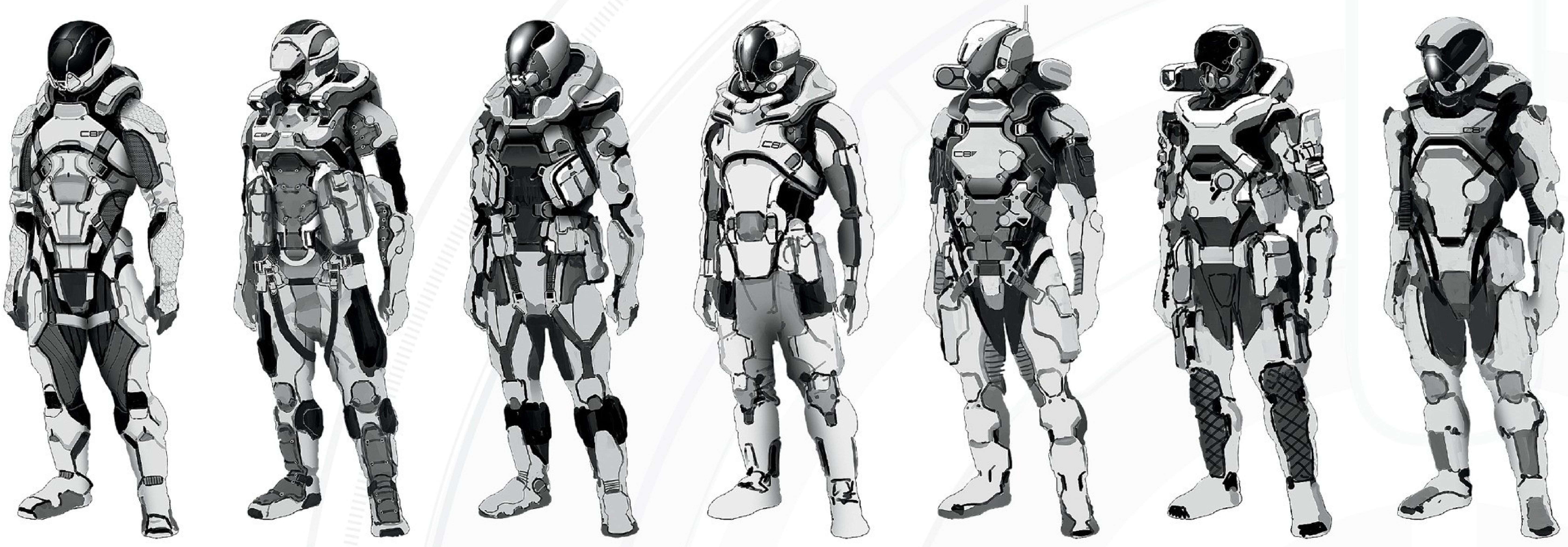
HL: As with the other Pathfinder equipment, the Pathfinder helmet had to show that its primary purpose is exploration, while still retaining the *Mass Effect* style. We coupled a glass dome that evokes explorer utility, with the more traditional armor around the mouth of the helmet. The glass visor also helps to convey the characters' emotions when the environment dictates that they wear helmets.

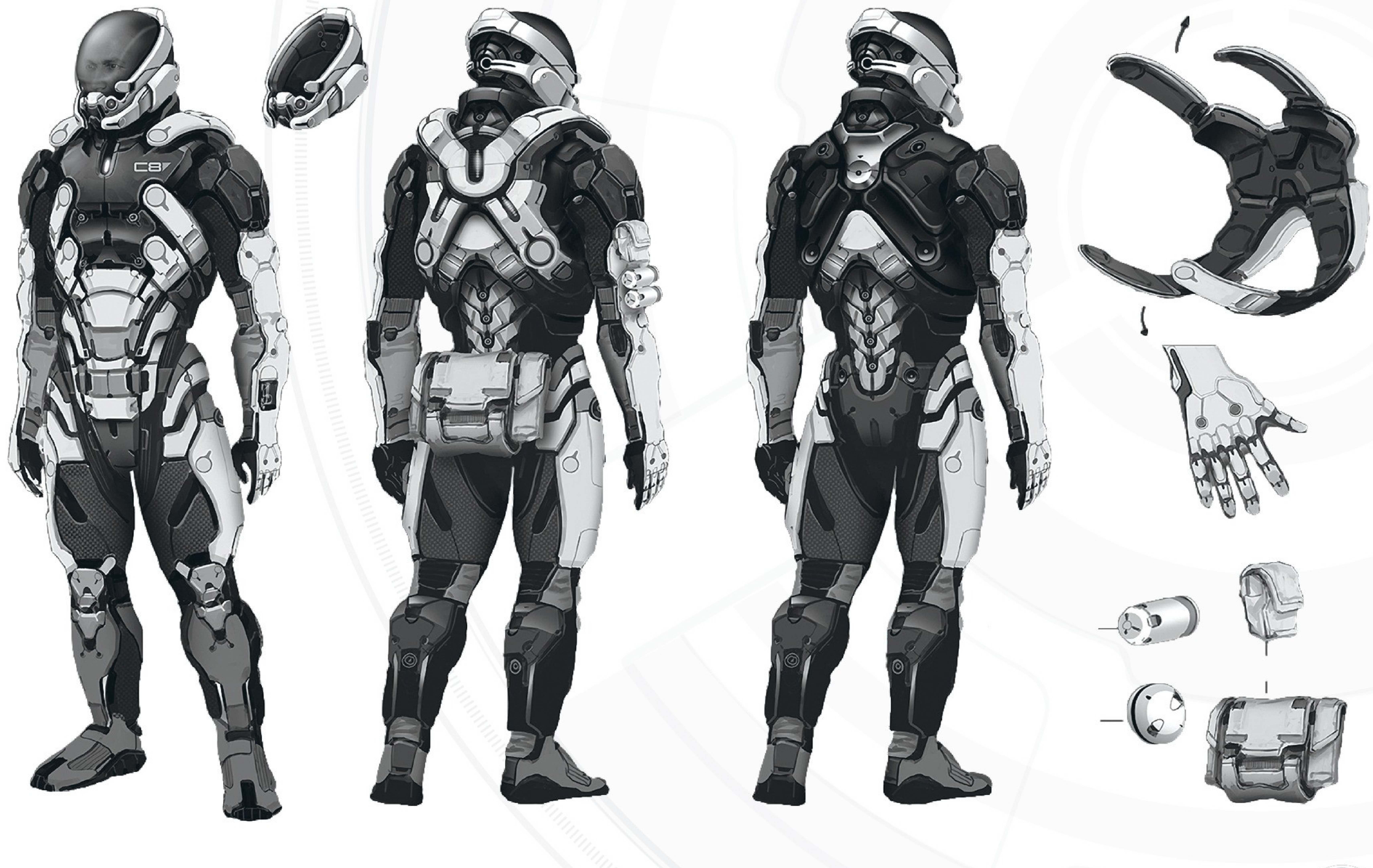


HUMAN

HL: Above are some more casual off-duty human styles. The Guardian armor on the facing page was one of our earliest armor concepts for the game. I am still a big fan of this look.



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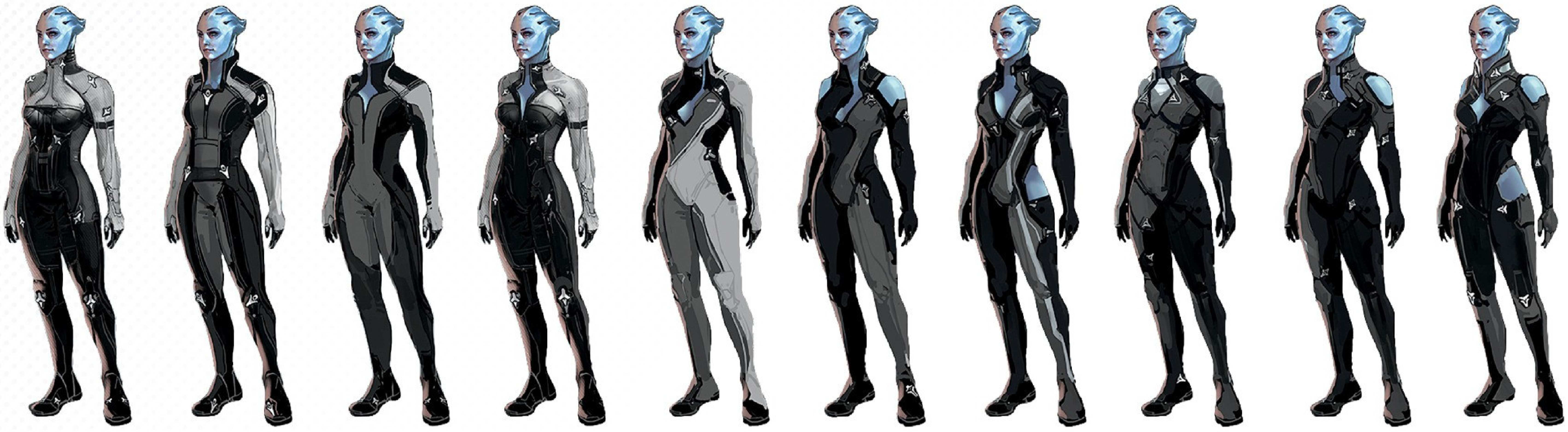
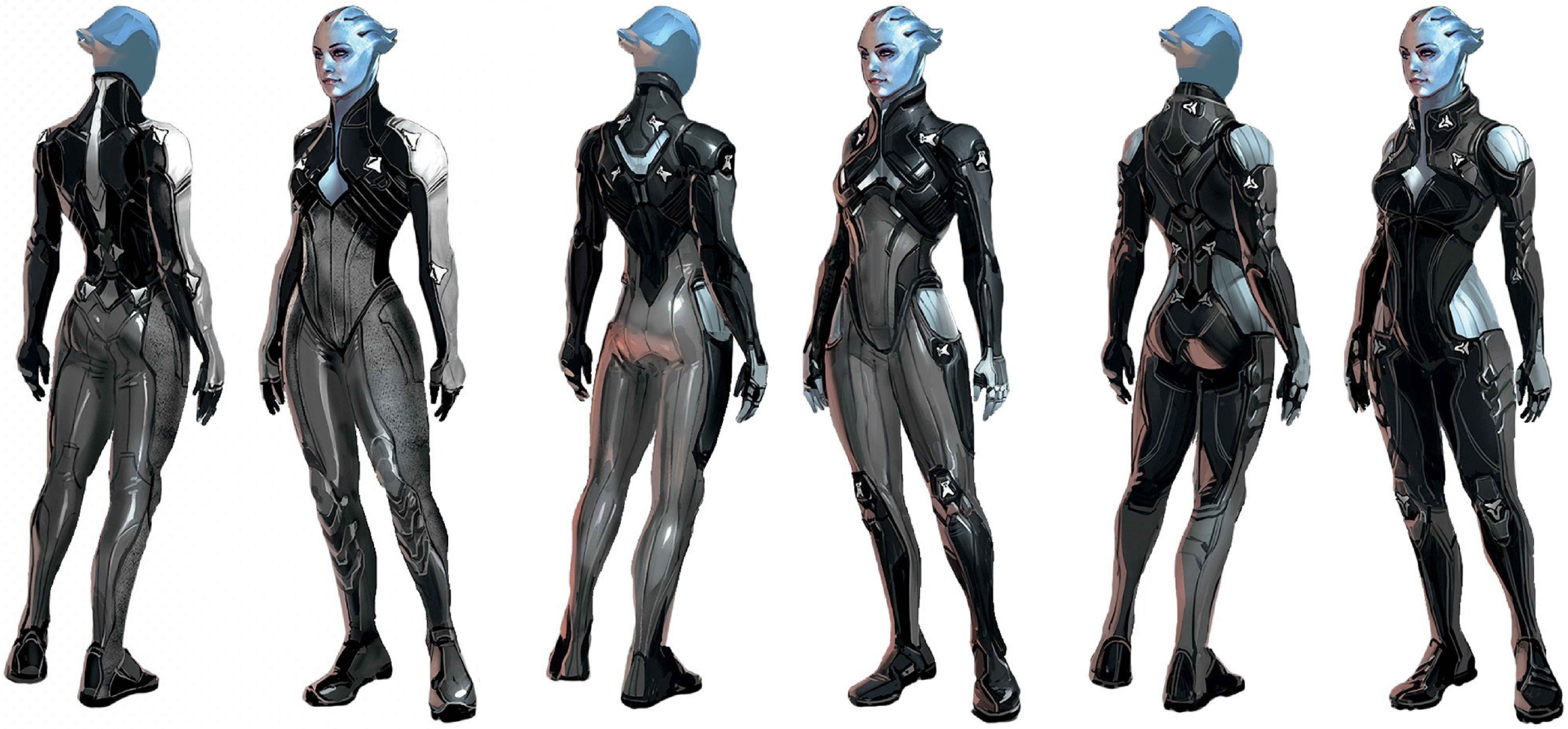
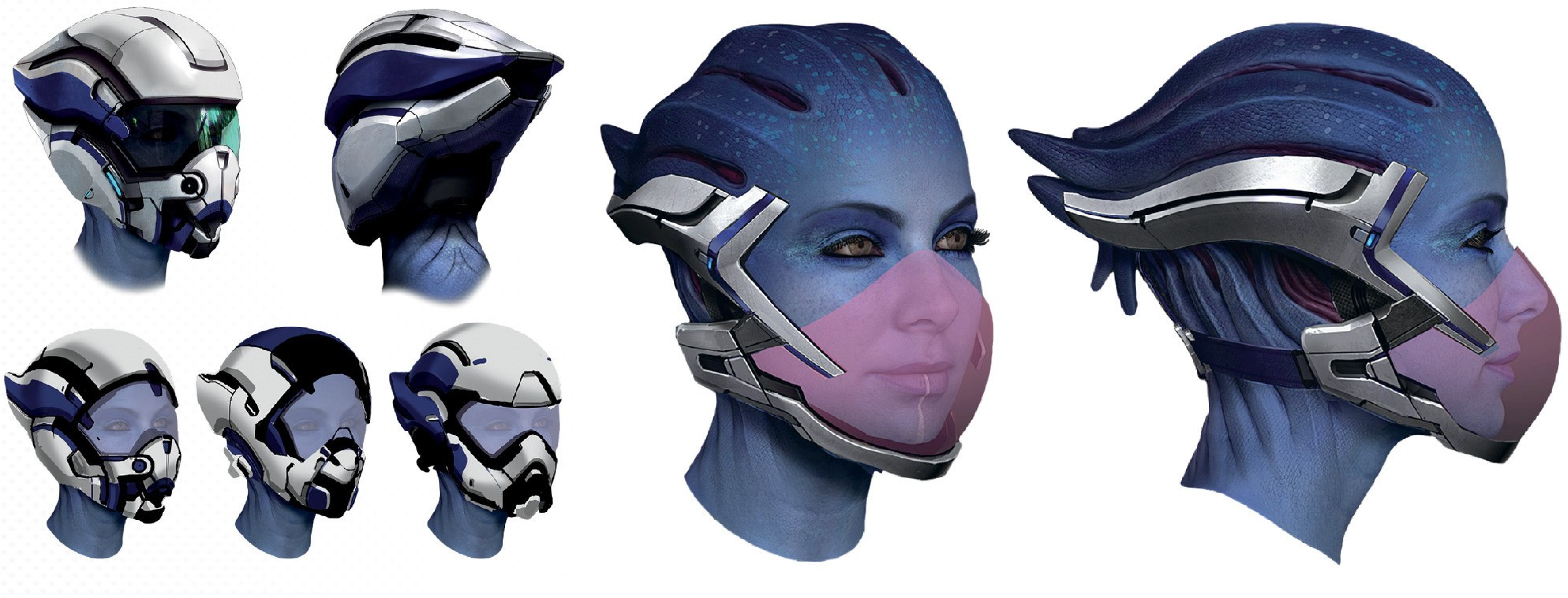
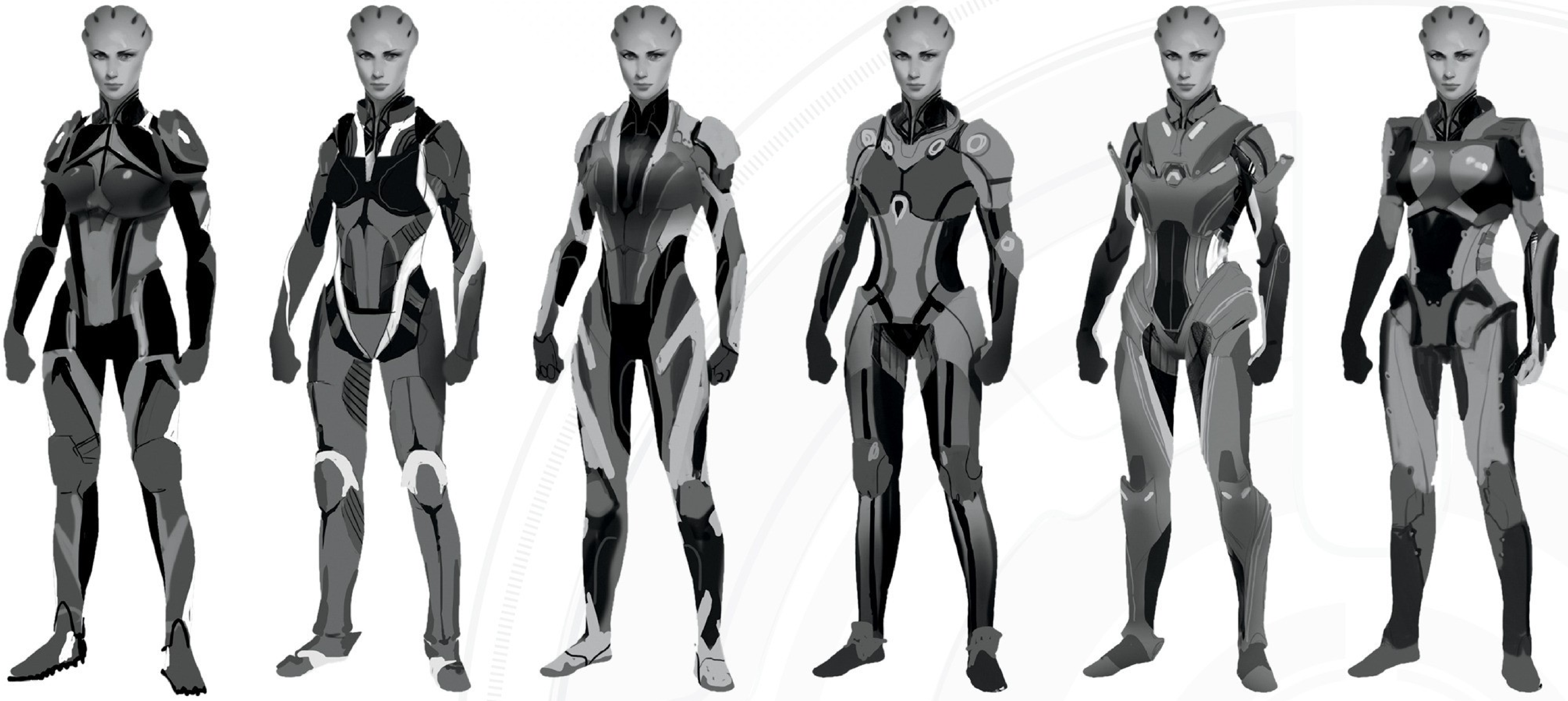


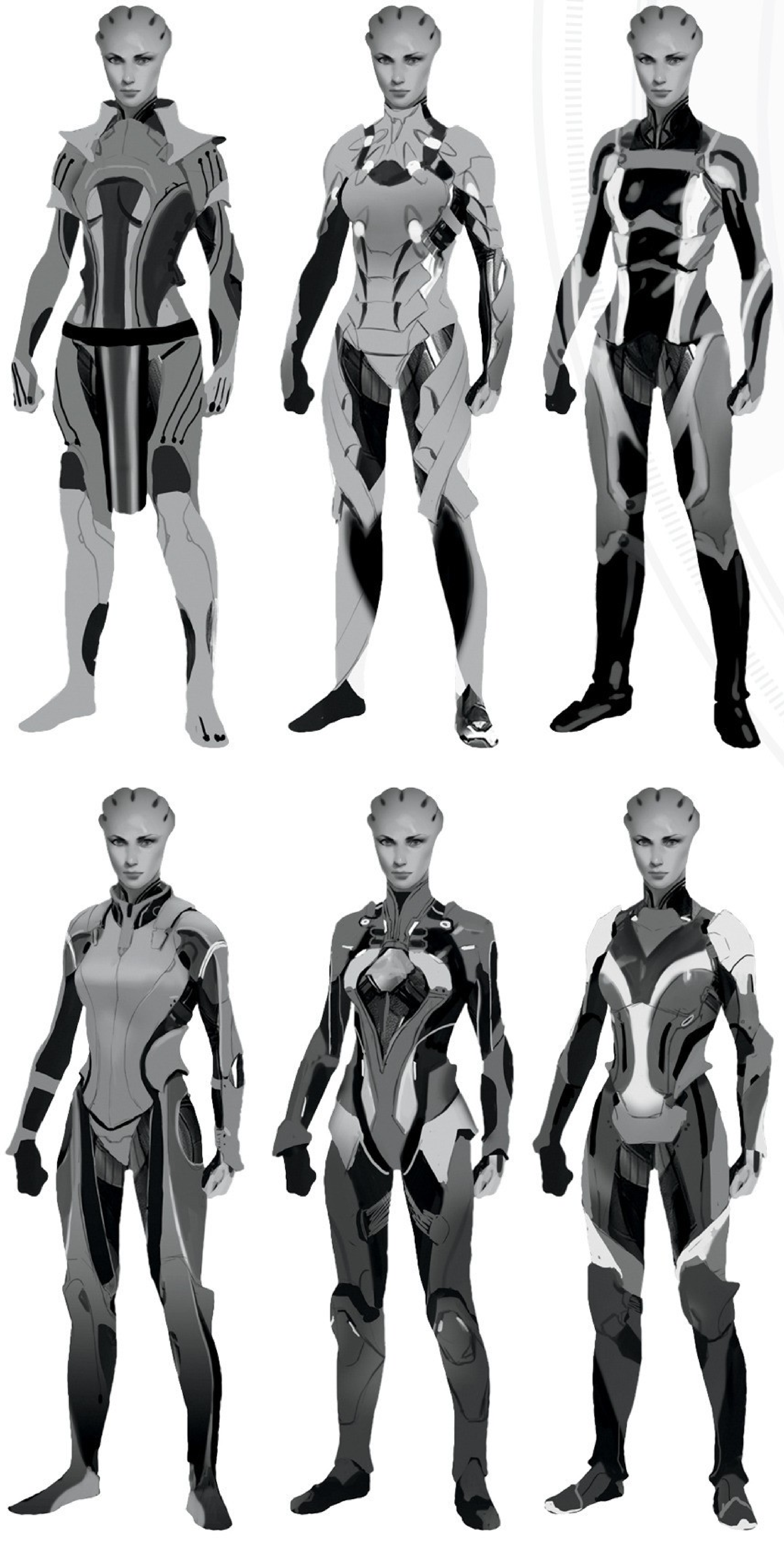


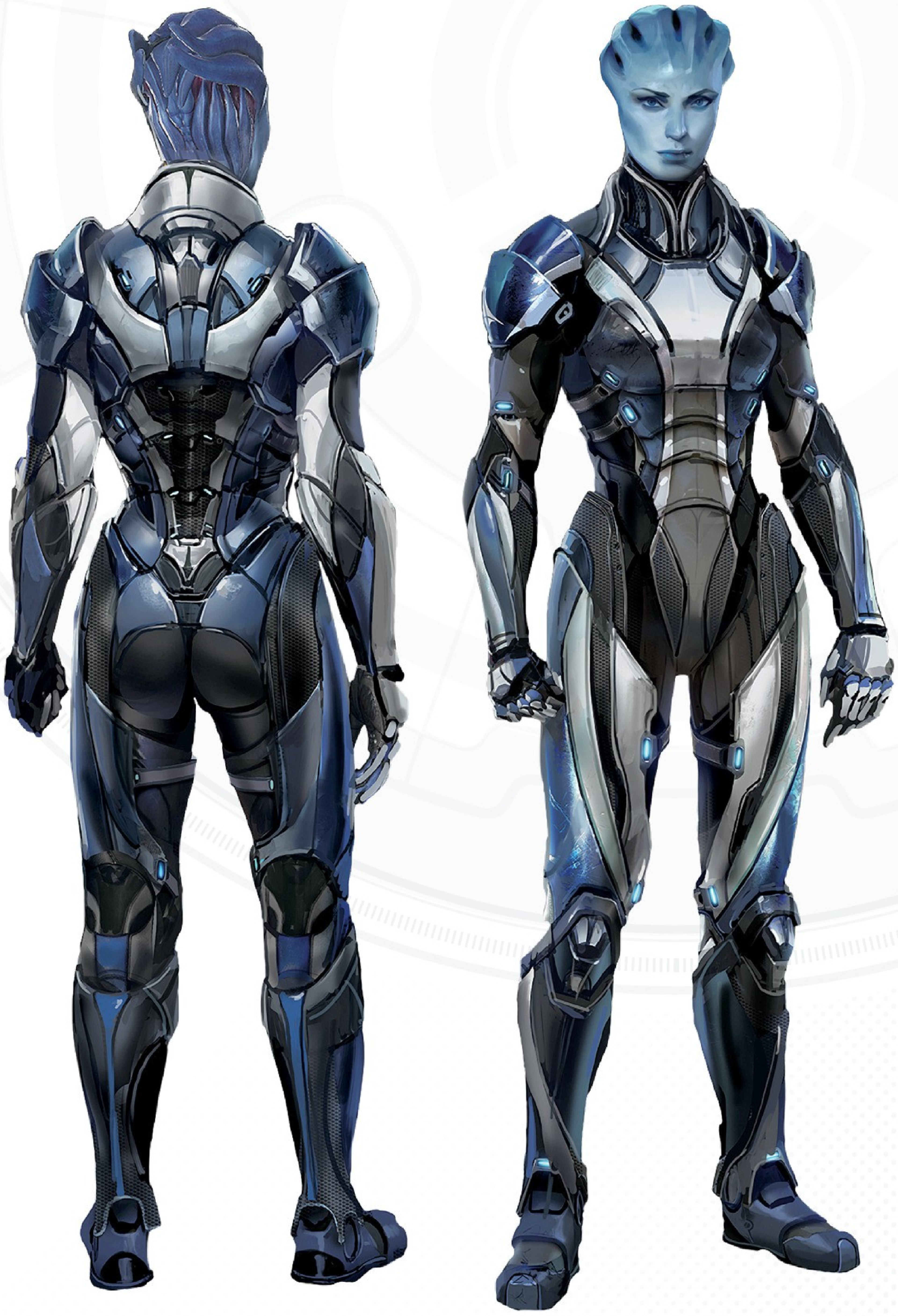


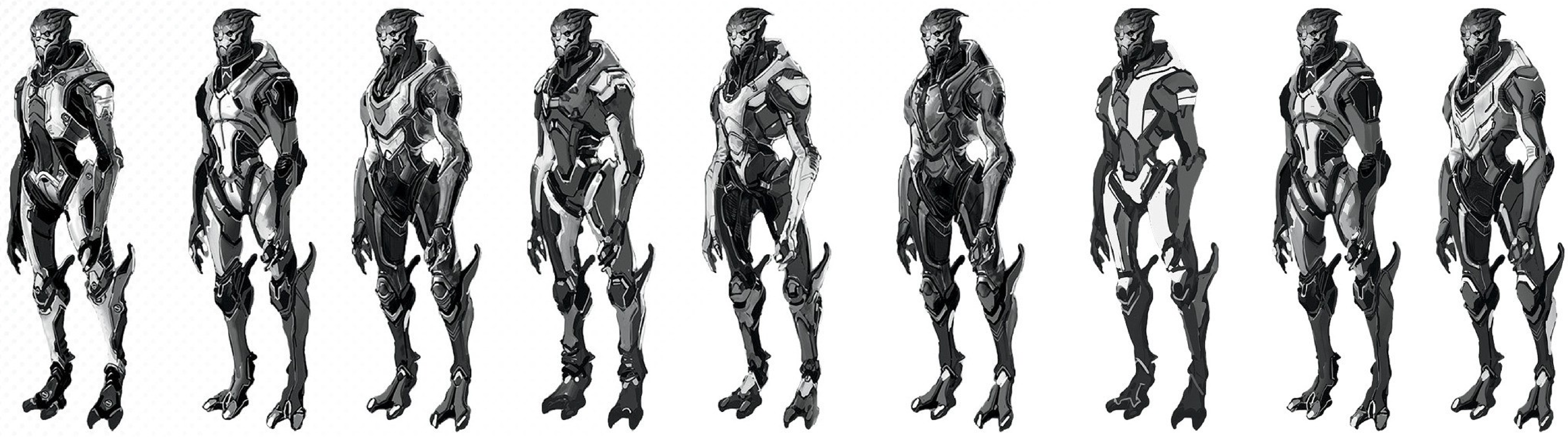
ASARI

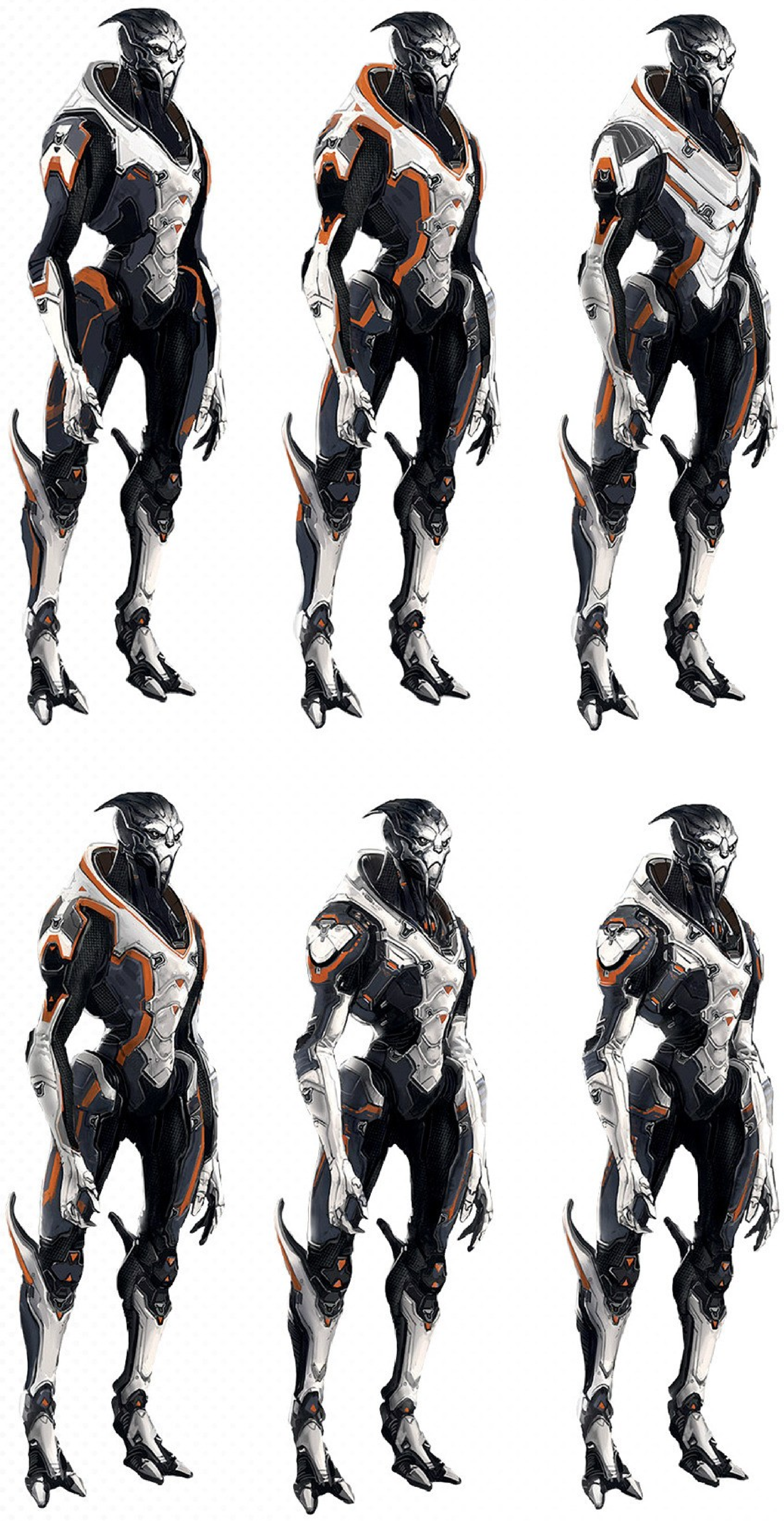
HL: *Mass Effect: Andromeda* introduced armor and underarmor designed specifically for the asari. In the original trilogy, the asari would just wear standard human armors, with the notable exception of the justicars and commandos.

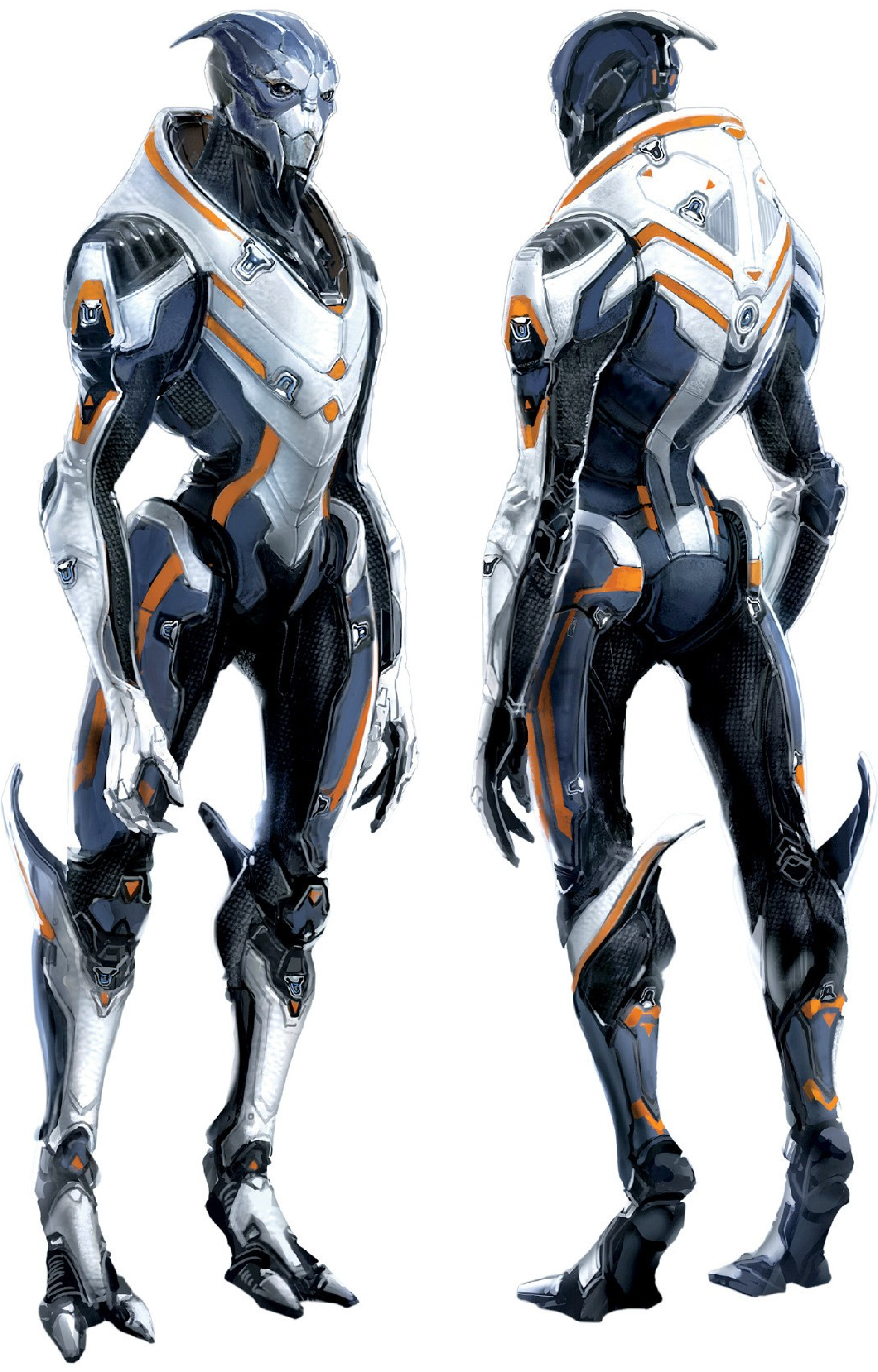






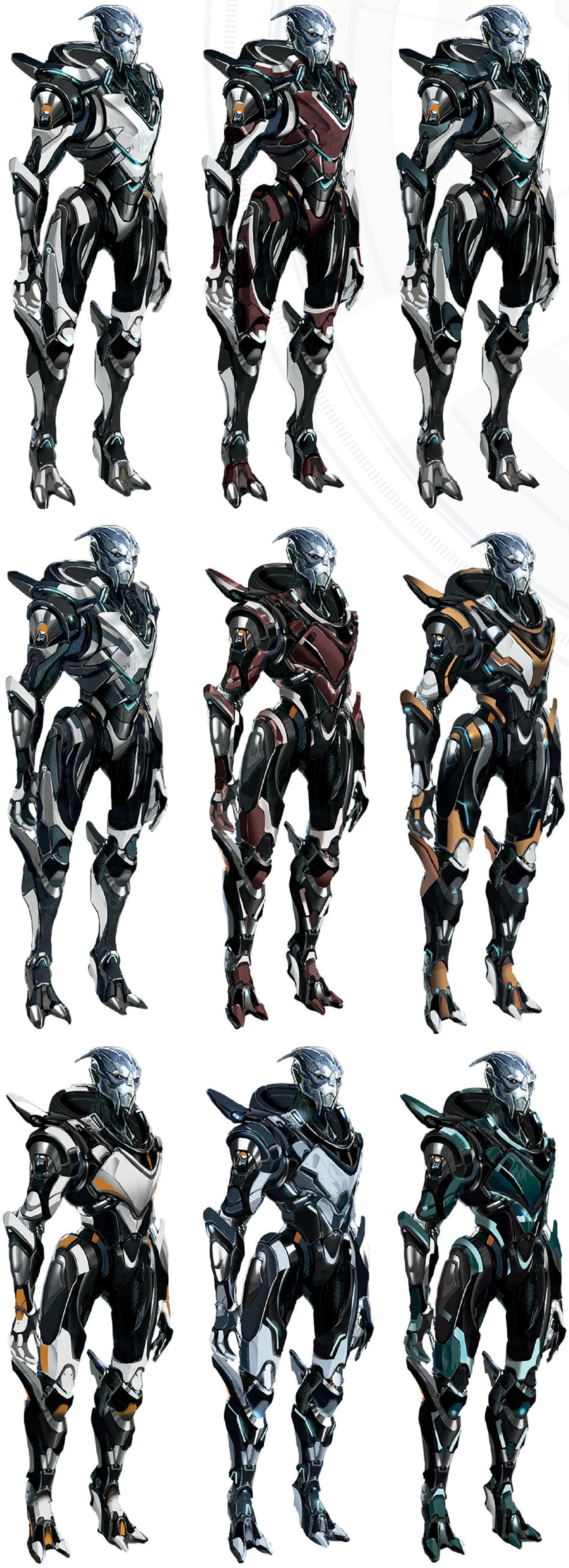


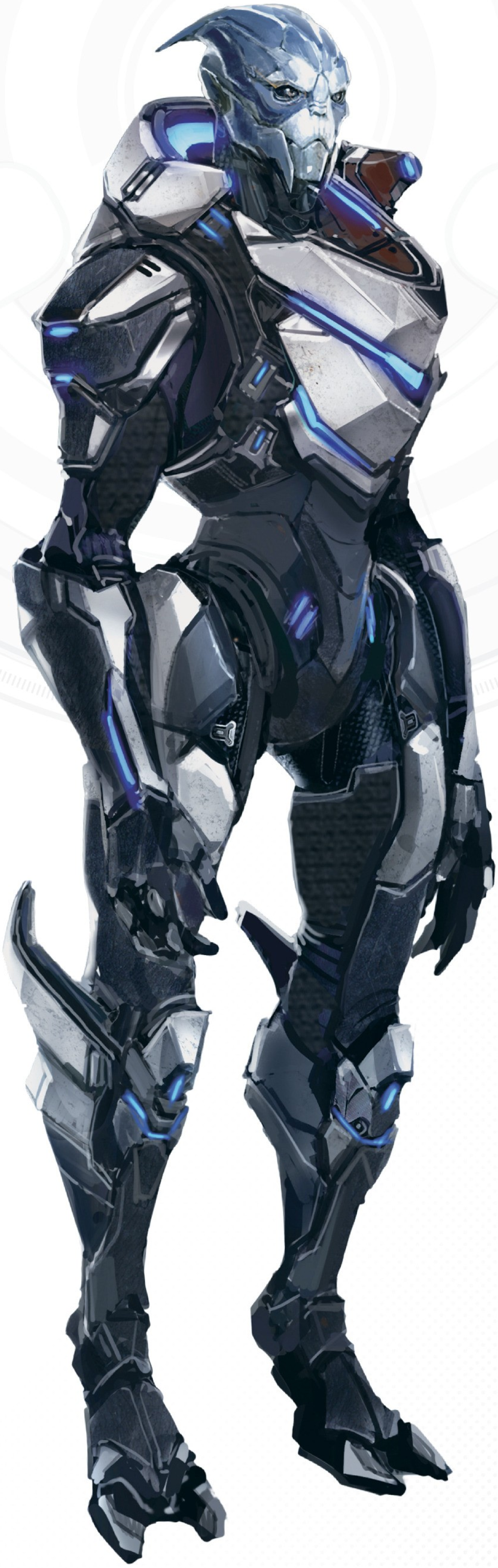


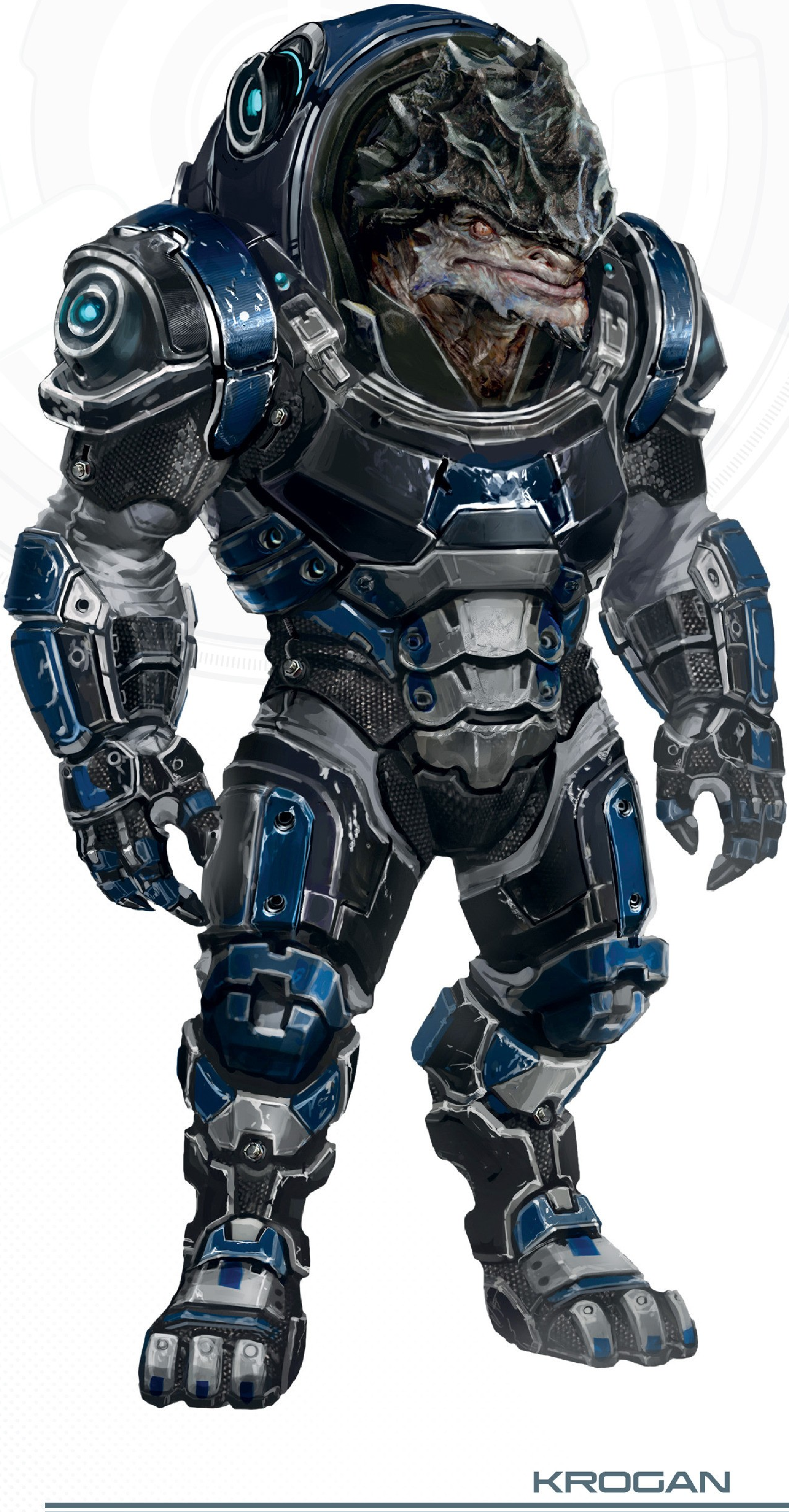


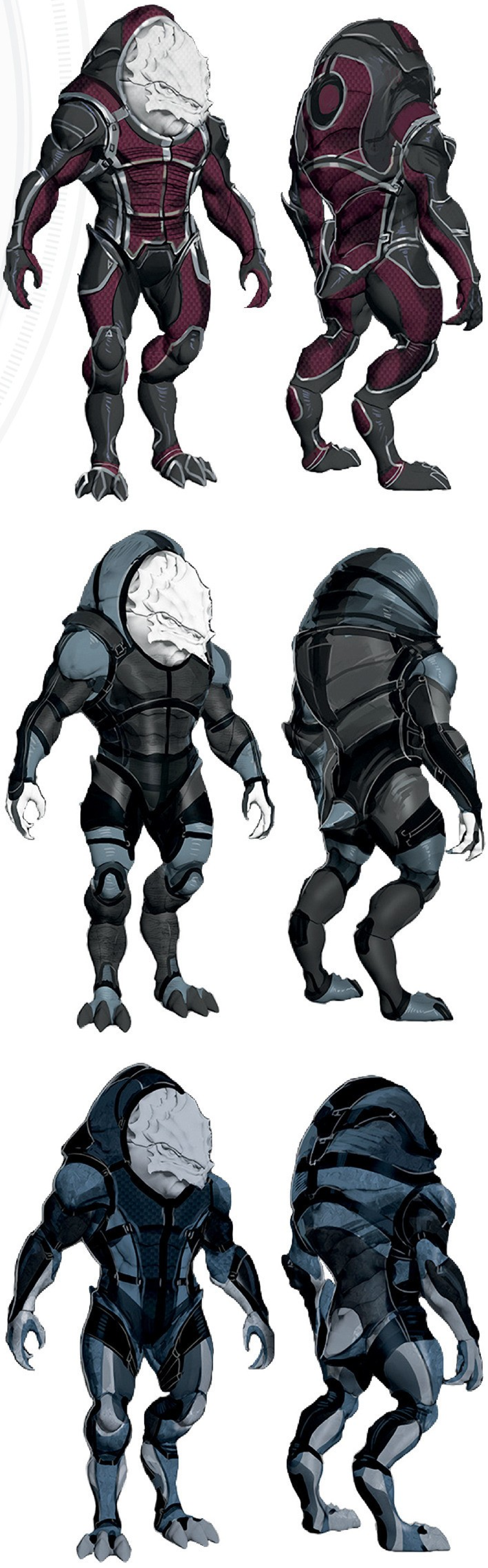
TURIAN

JB: The turian armor was my very first character contribution to *Mass Effect: Andromeda*. I think it helped set the tone for overall turian armor moving forward.



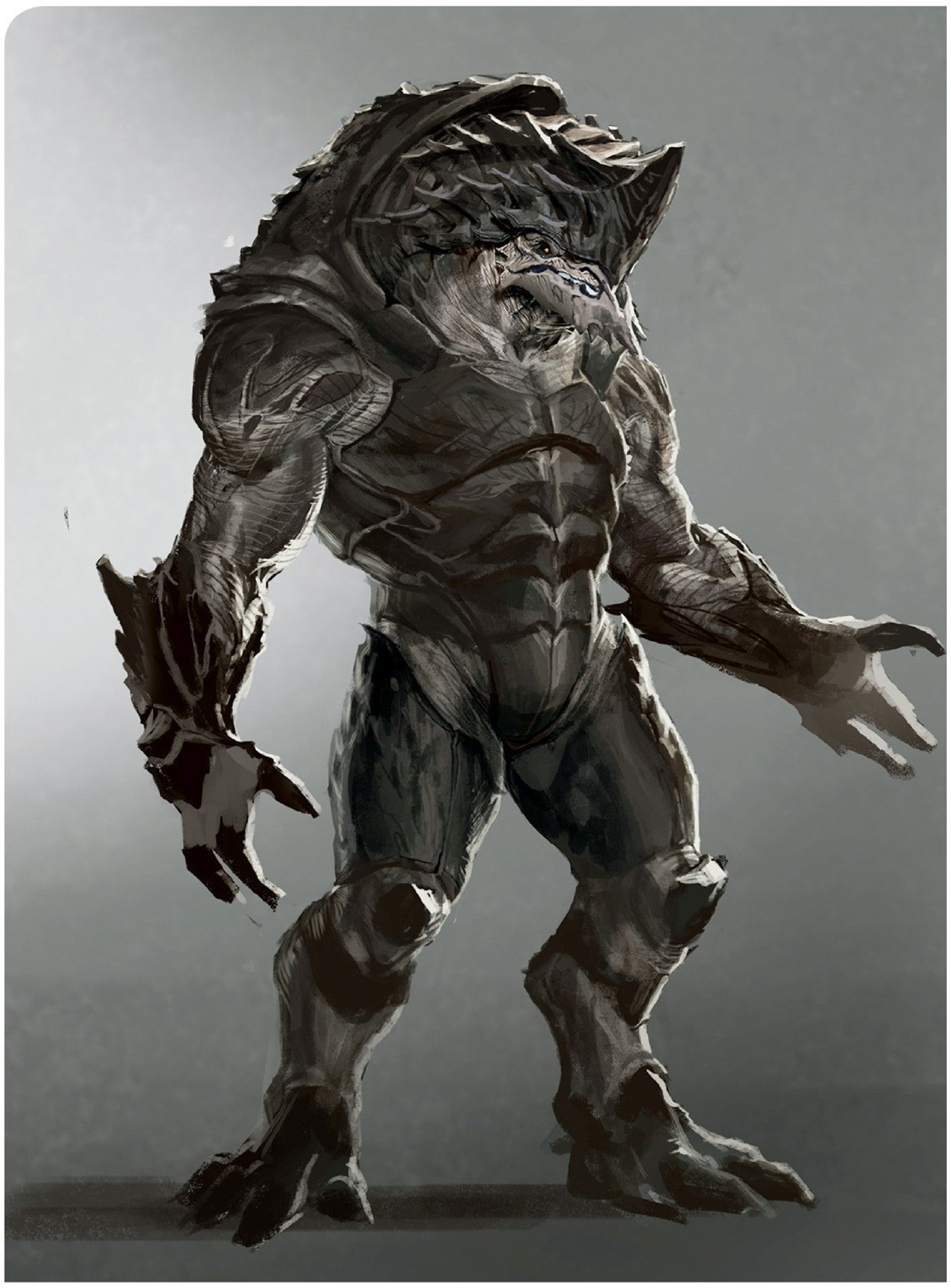


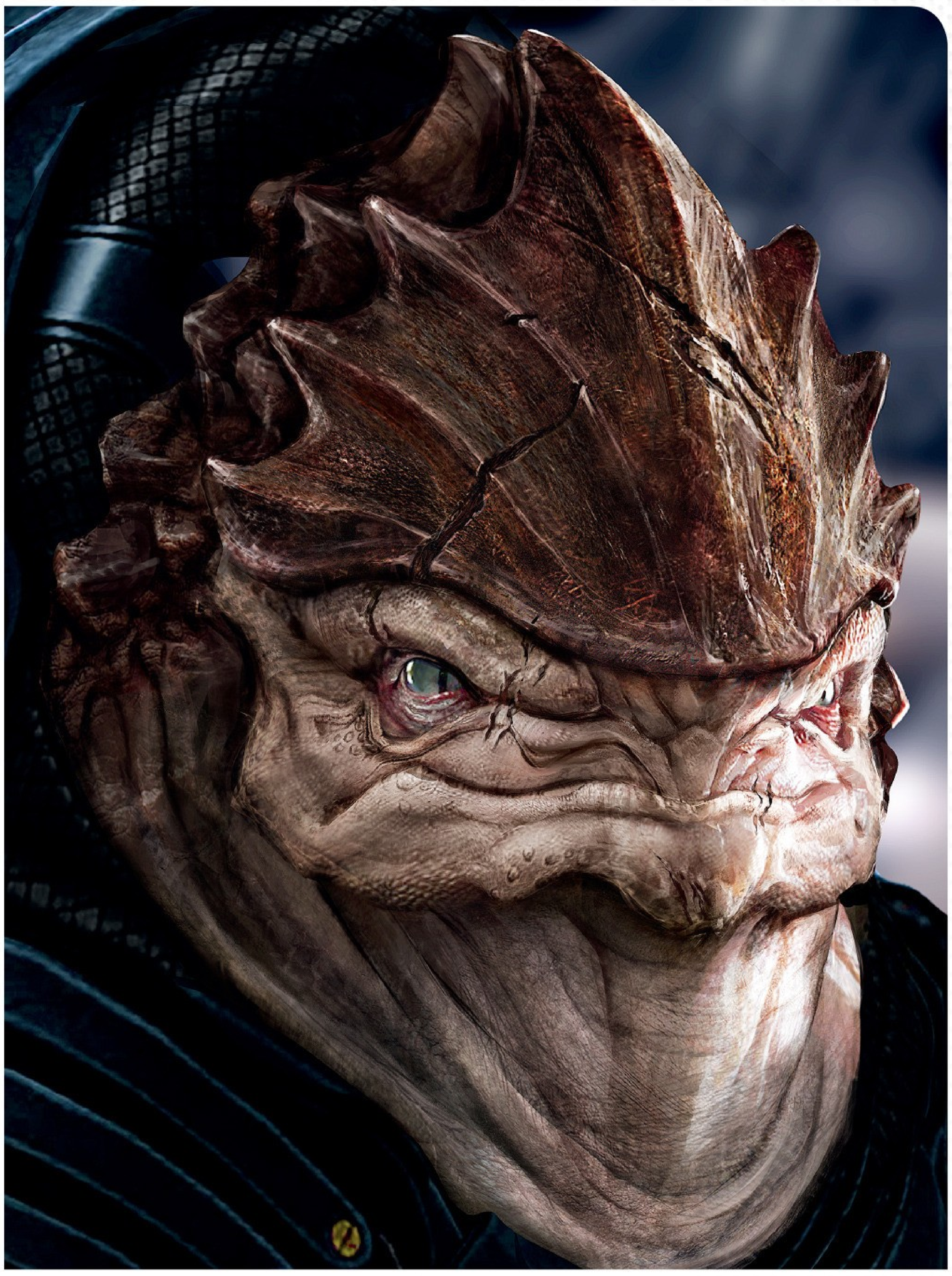


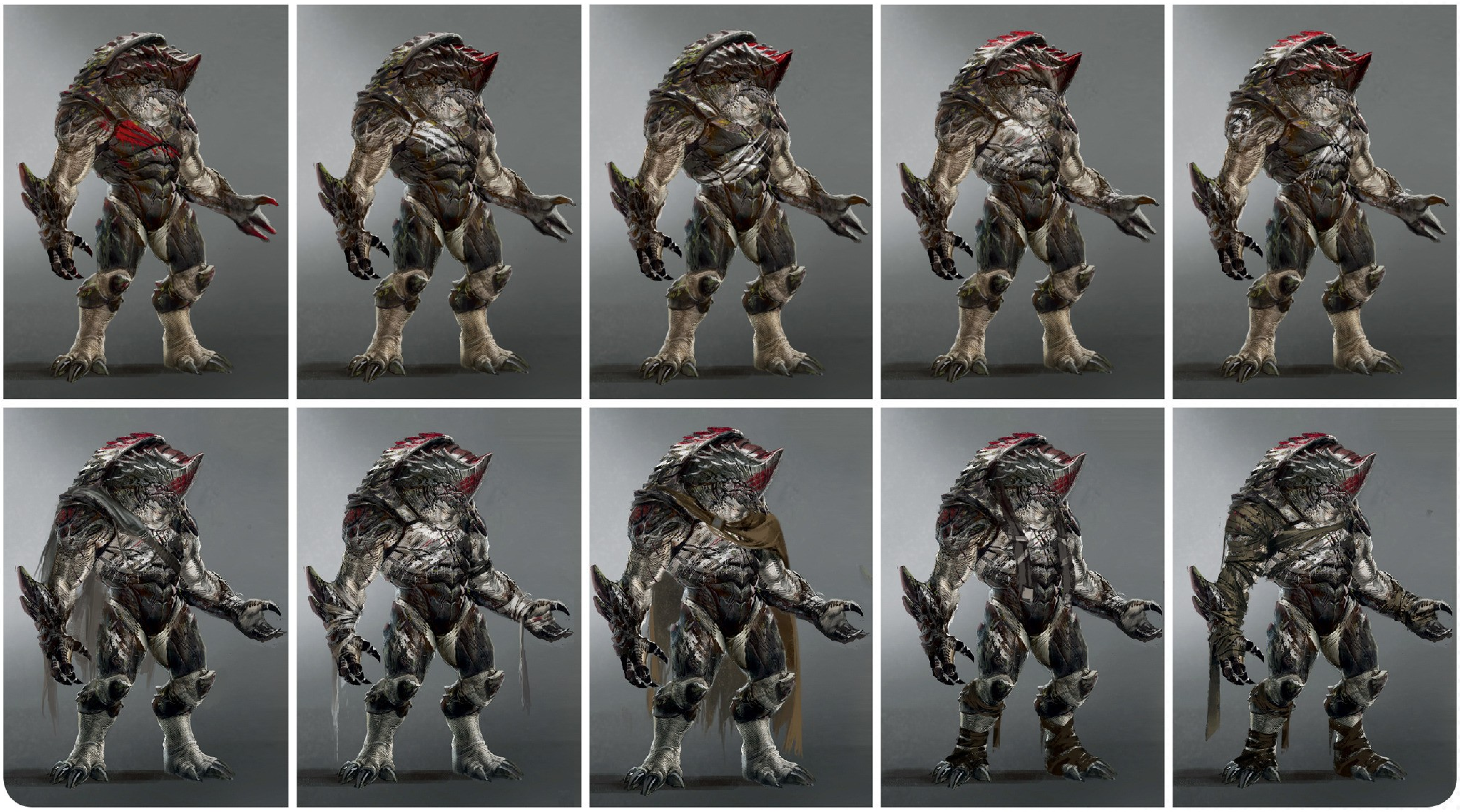


KROGAN

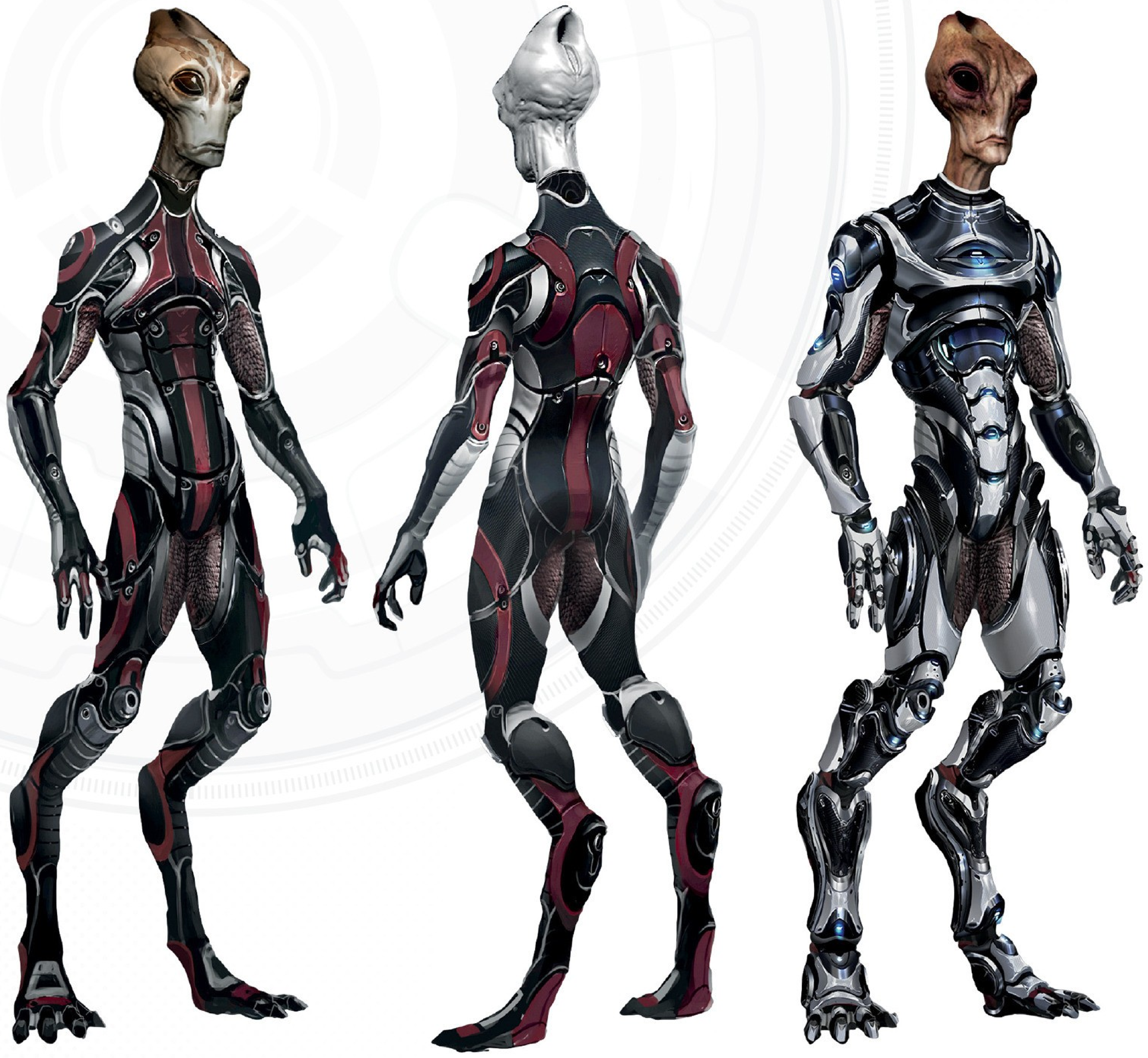
JB: We revisited the krogan very early in the production of *Andromeda*. The initial struggle was determining how to update the design to keep it fresh while still maintaining the iconic look that fans remembered. We kept the overall bulkiness of the original krogan, but that would prove to be a struggle for animation. Toward the end of the design process we had to make some alterations to allow improved range of motion between their hood-like shells and their heads.

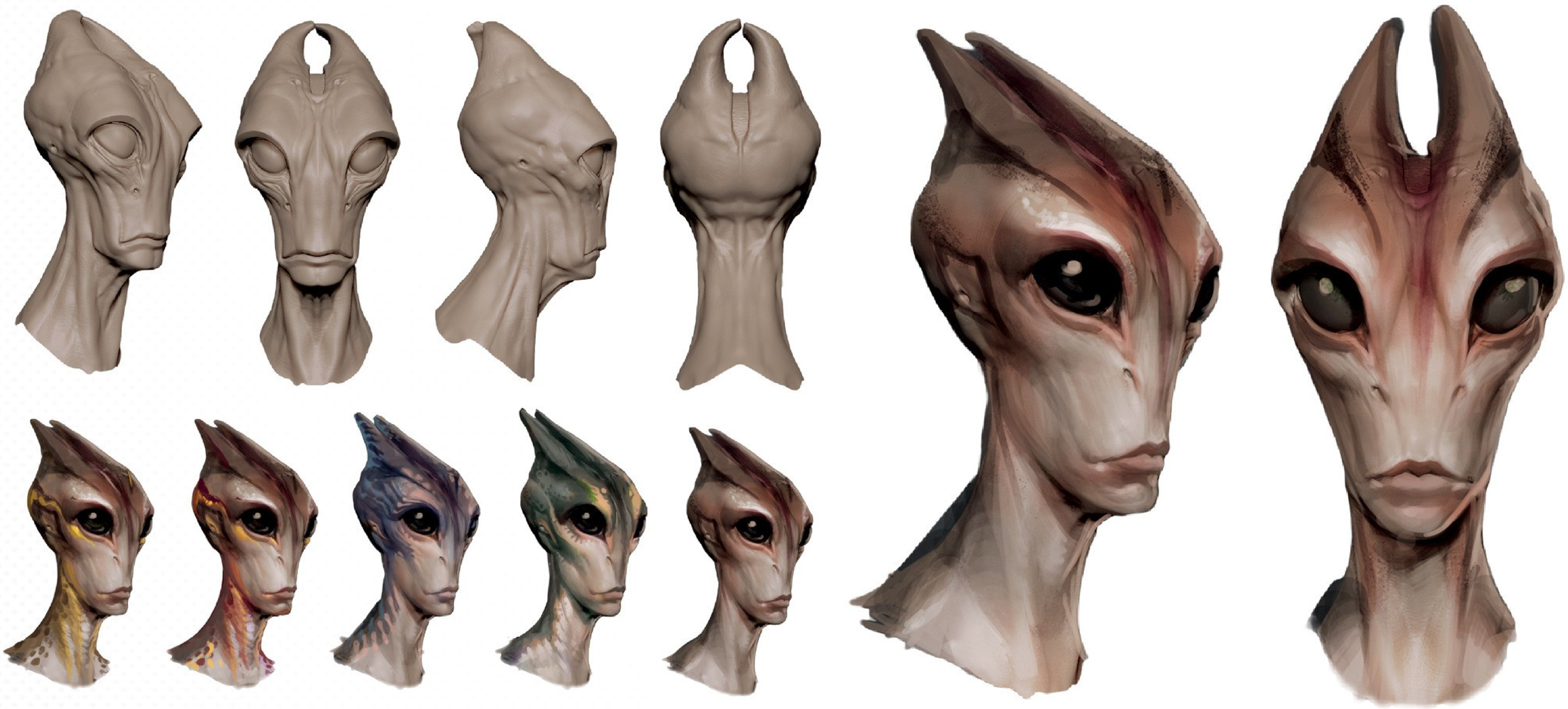






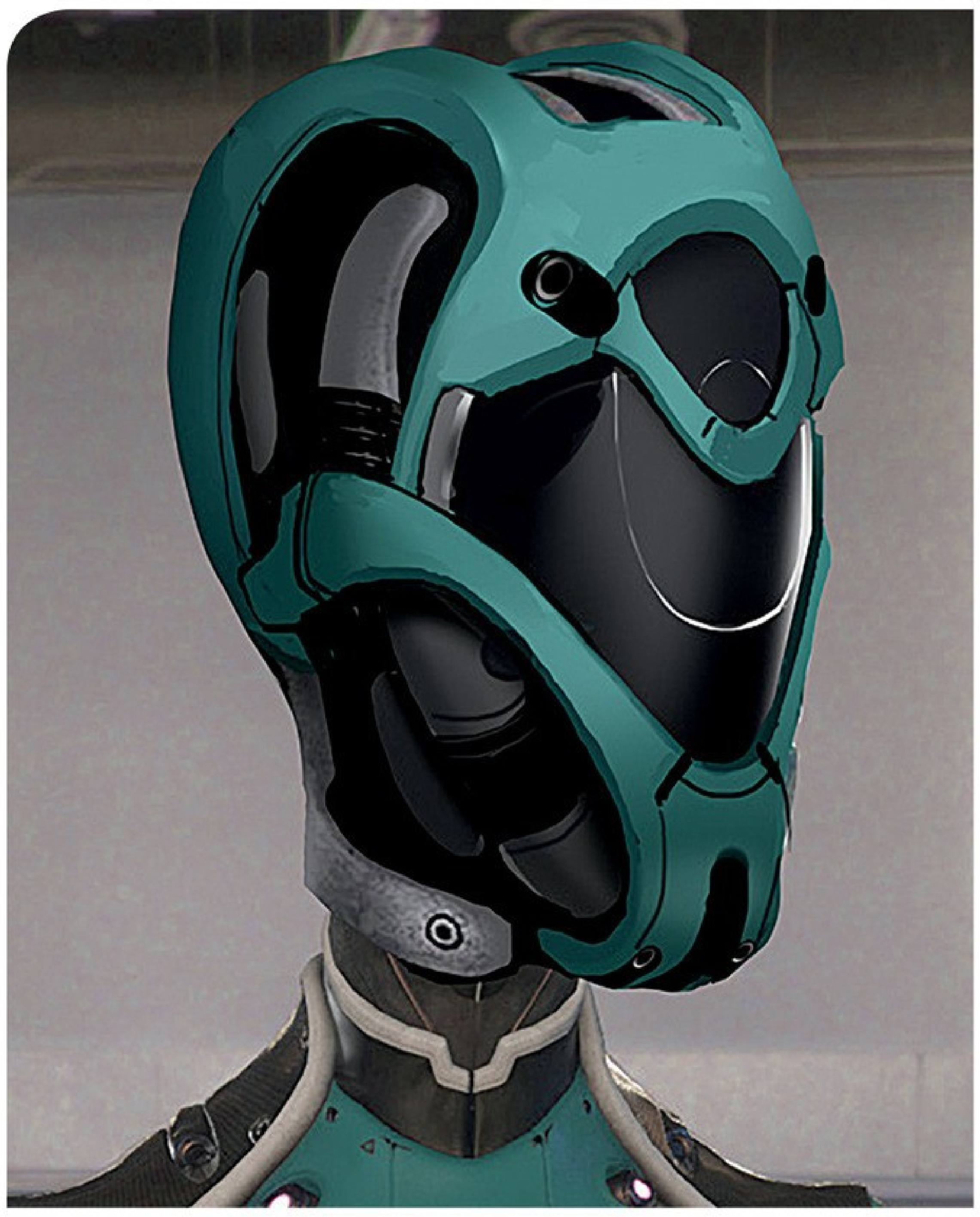
HL: The Behemoth was extremely fun to model! It's not very often that we can play with the look of the existing aliens, but since this is an exalted krogan—which we've never seen before—we had a lot of fun creating the model. I really like how savage he looks. We nicknamed him "Kro-brute" for a little while.

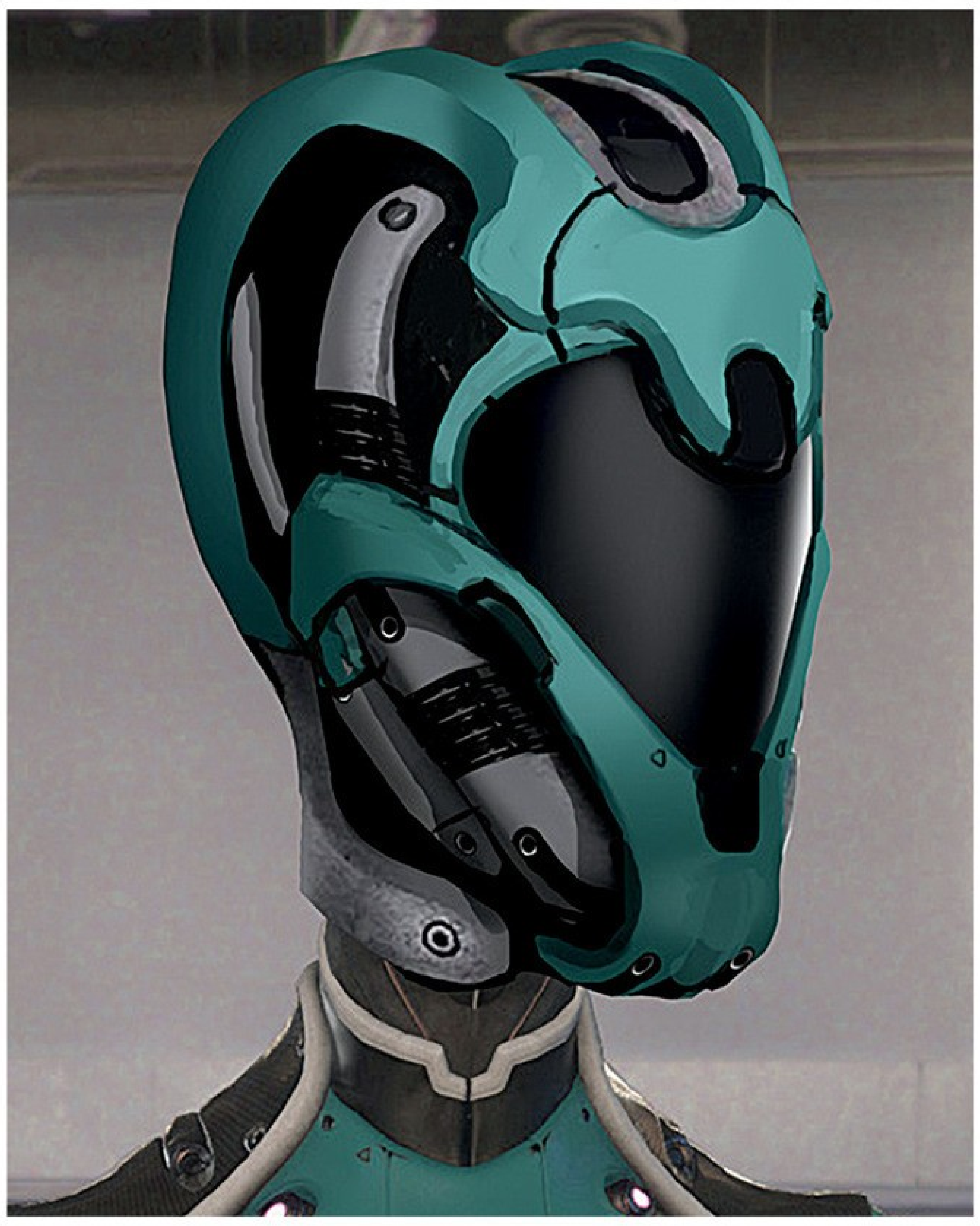


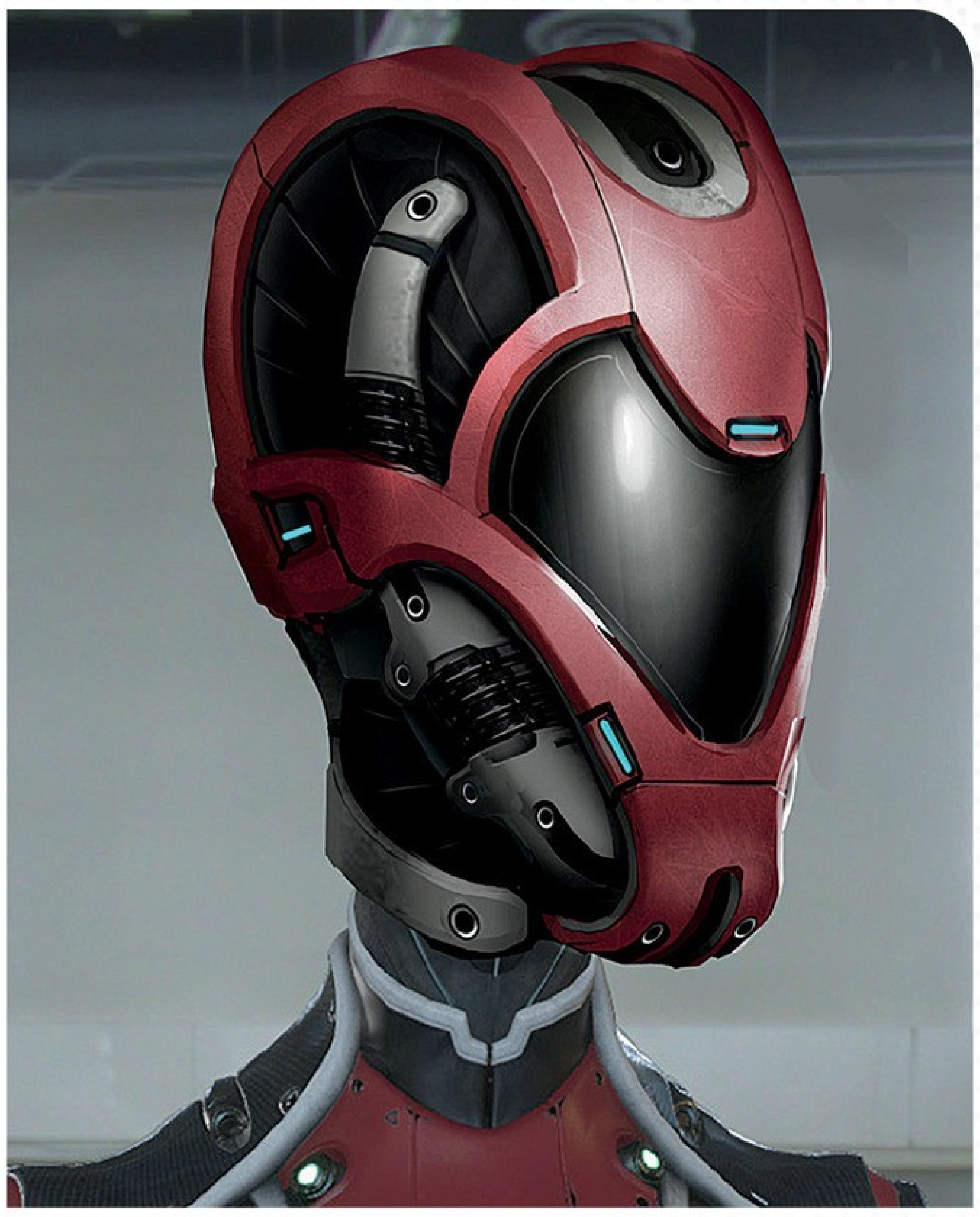


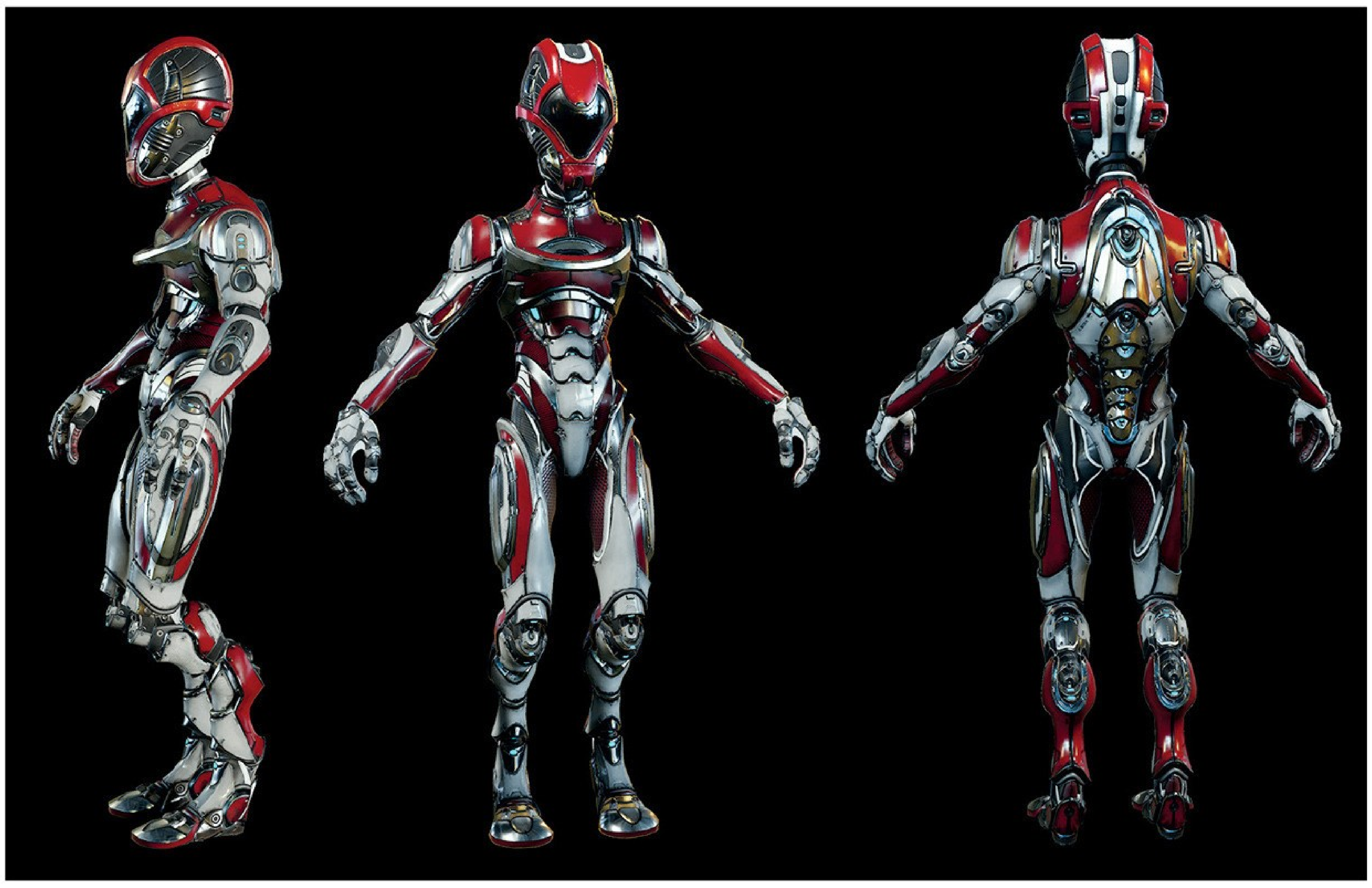
SALARIAN

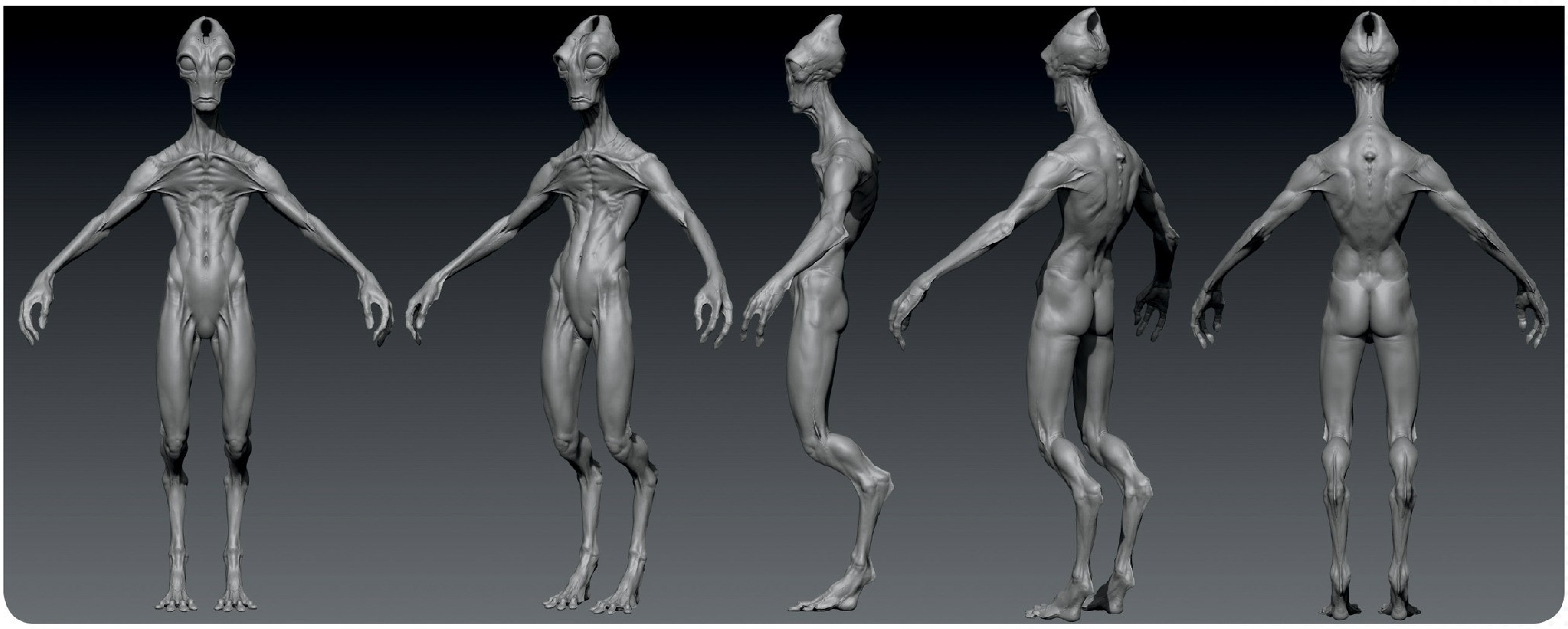
HL: These heads are early prototypes of the female salarian. We ended up using the exact same head model as the male since it's been established in *Mass Effect* lore that salarians are androgynous.



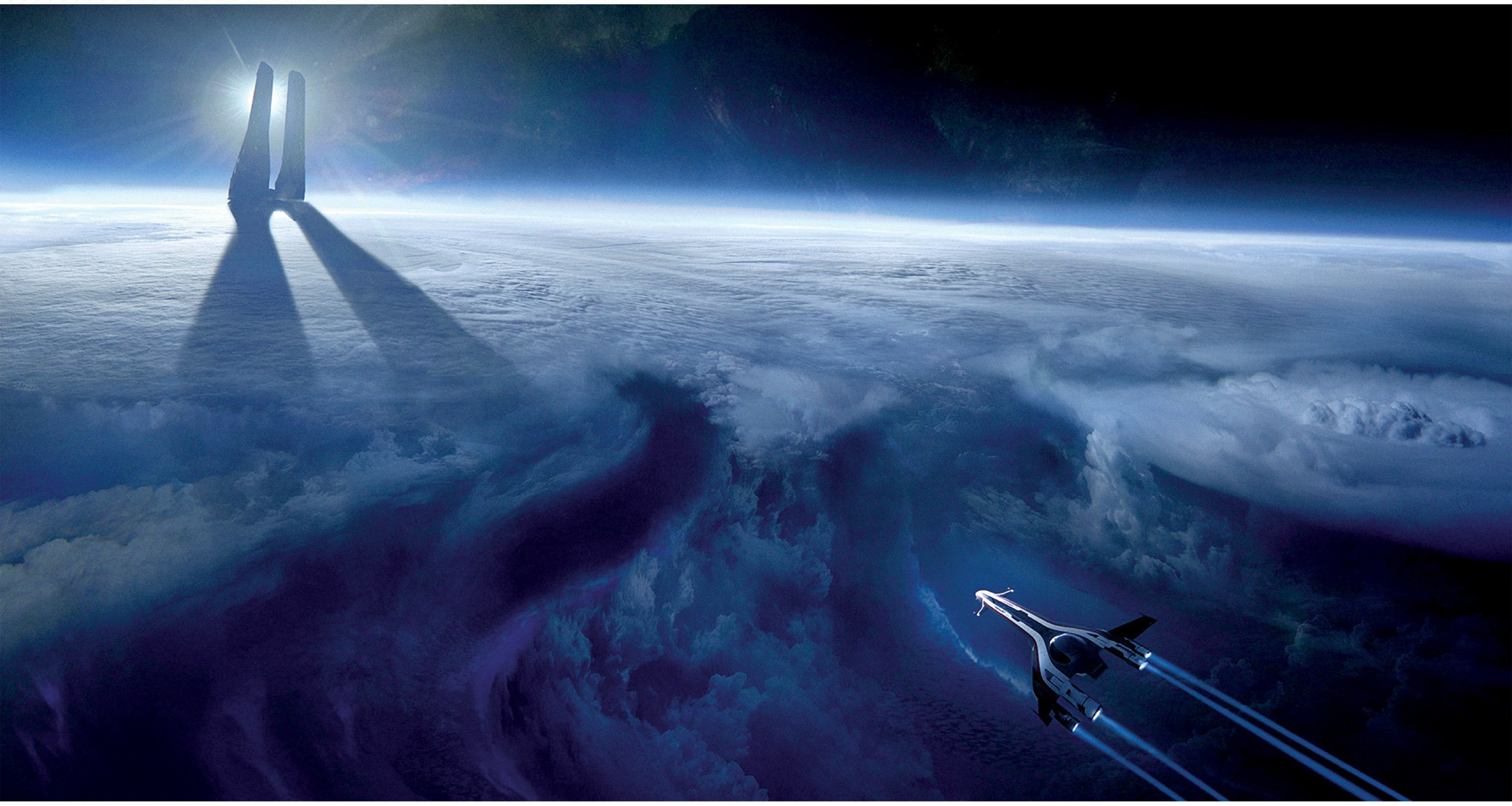


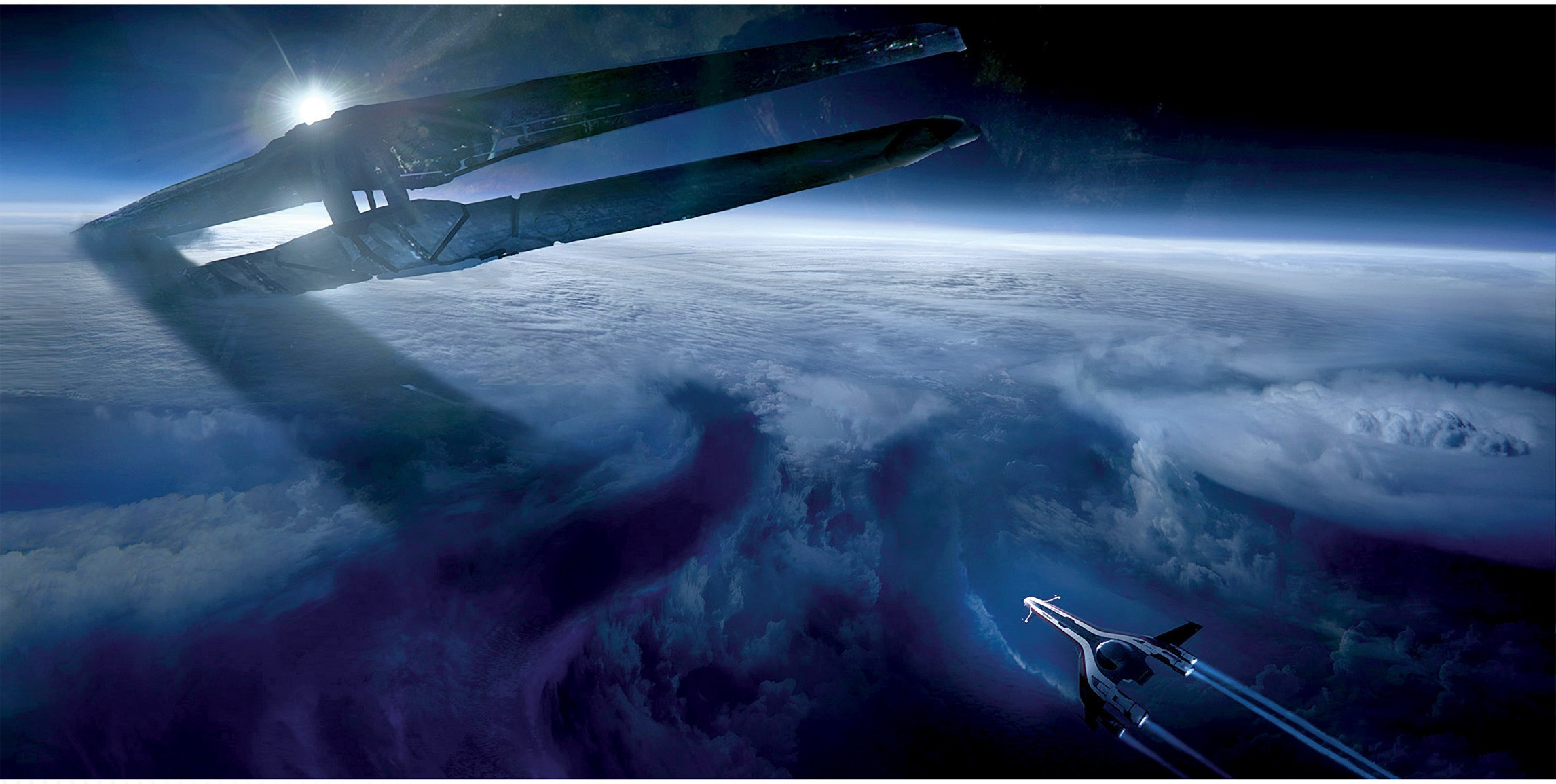






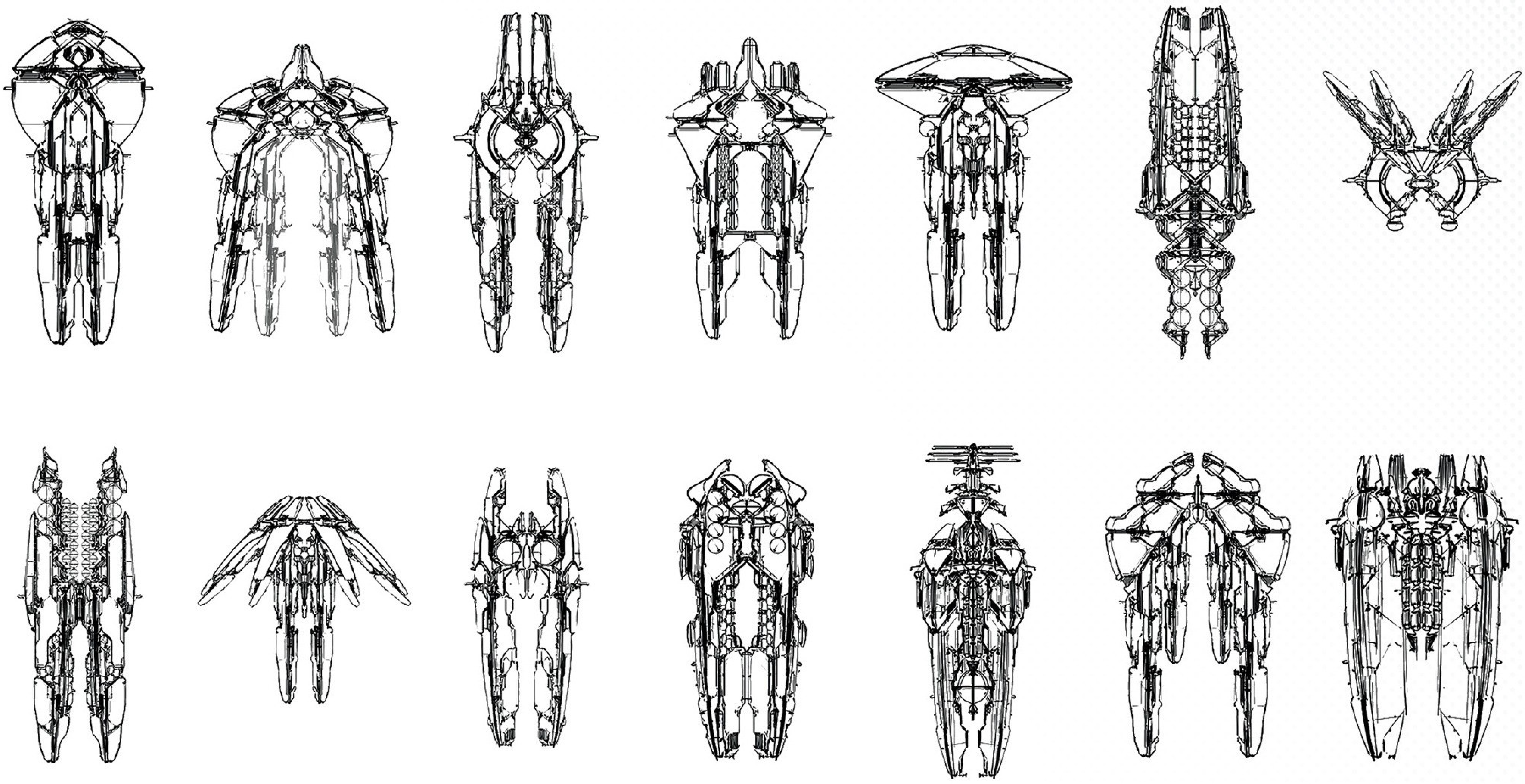
CC: Marco Plouffe made the salarian body before I joined the team. When I tackled the task of making the helmet, the biggest challenge surrounding the concept and model was to respect what Marco had achieved with the body. The texture of the body included a specific treatment that also needed to be translated to the helmet.

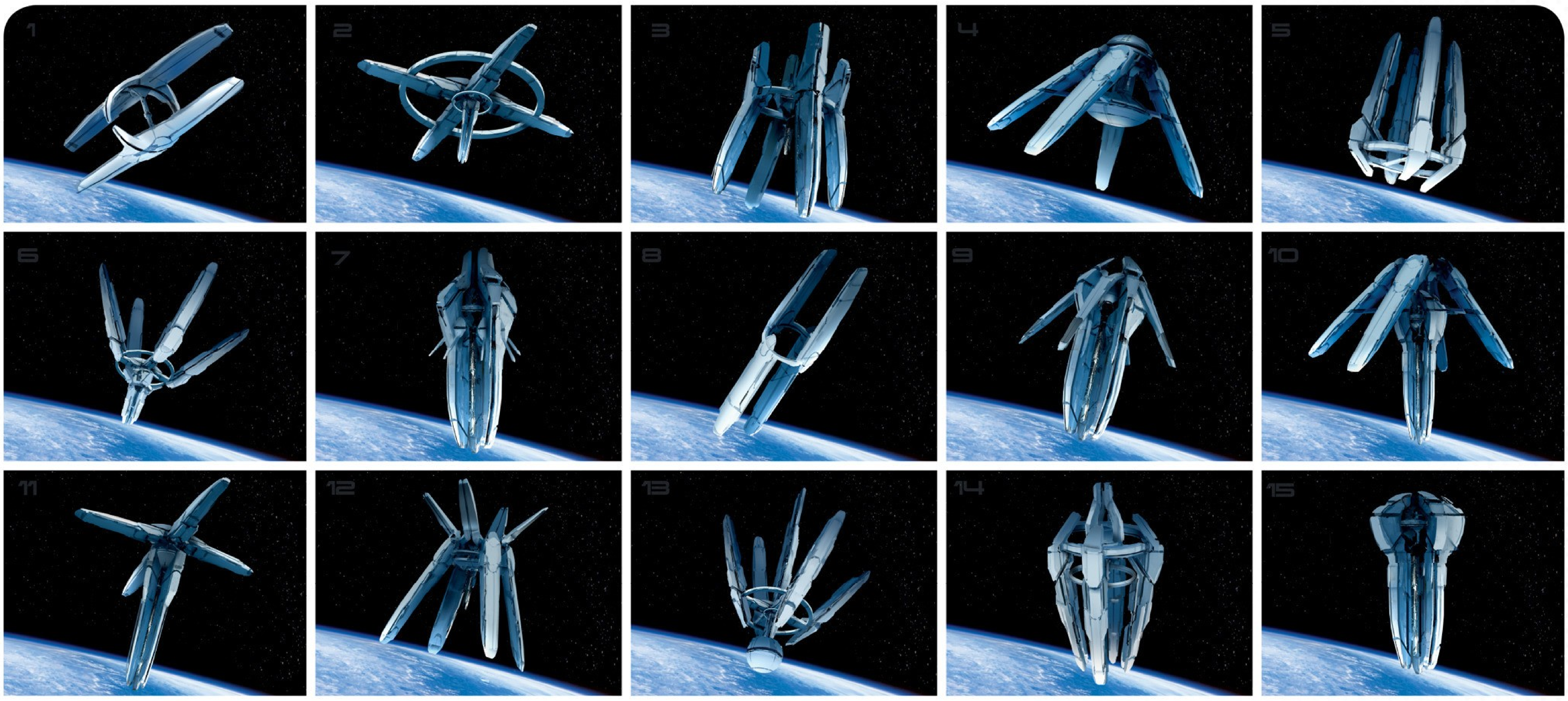




NEXUS AND ARKS

BS: The original idea for the Nexus was to have several individual ark ships docked into it, resulting in its final form. The overall shape and silhouette of the Nexus was our main focus—it needed to be iconic and retain a lot of the design language we're so familiar with in the *Mass Effect* style. In the end, the final design keeps a clean and simple silhouette while bearing a small resemblance to the Citadel.

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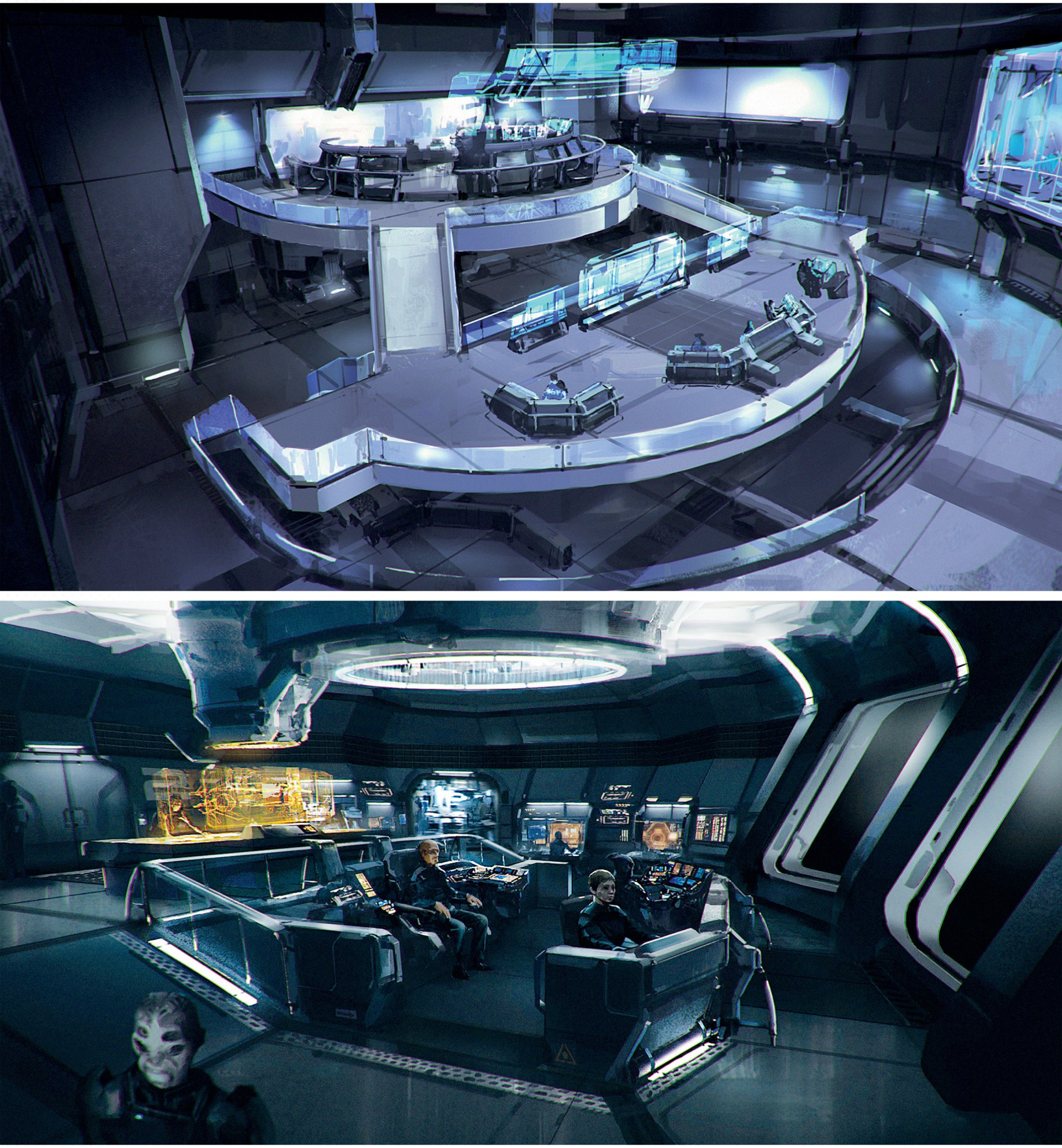
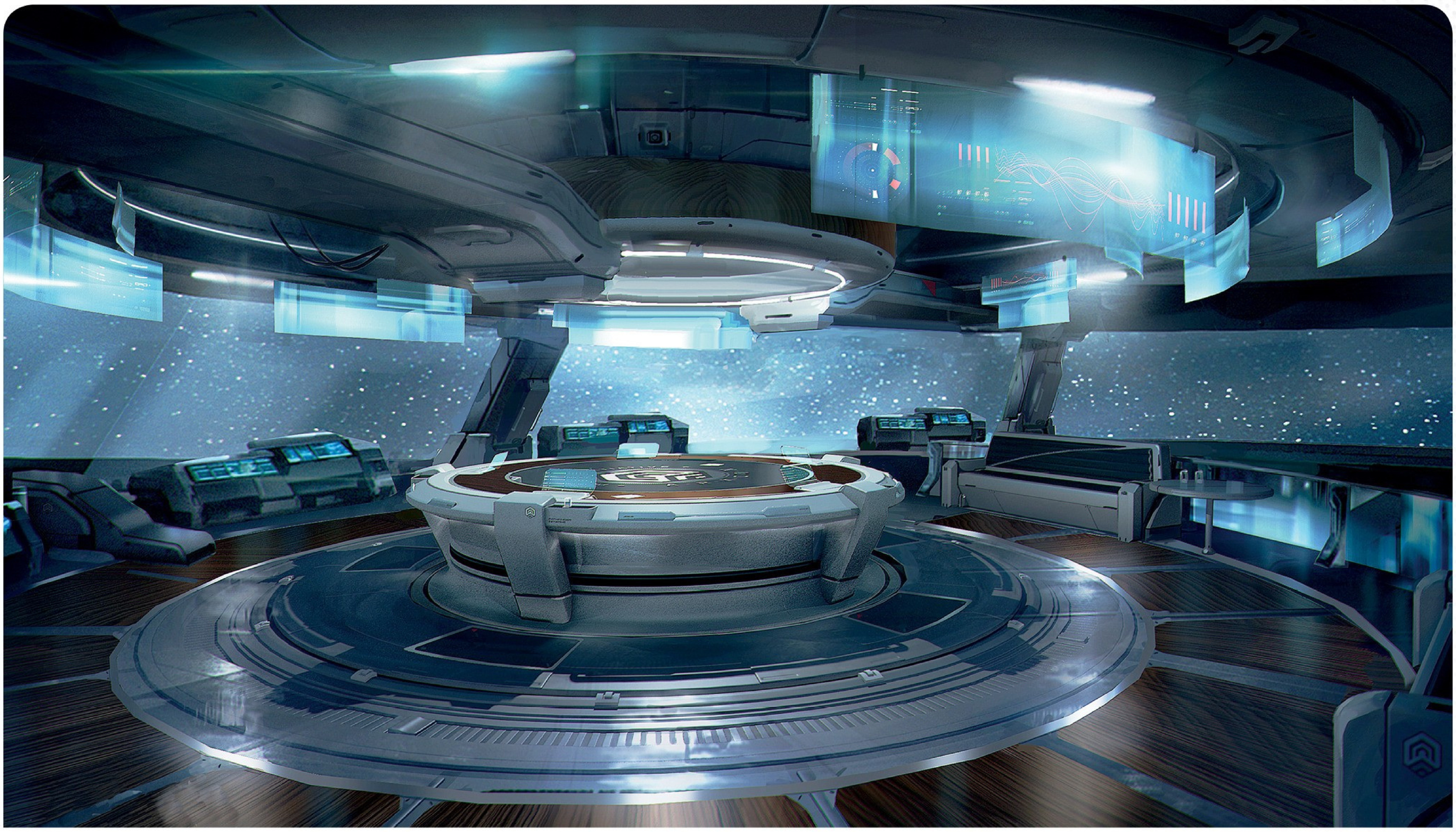
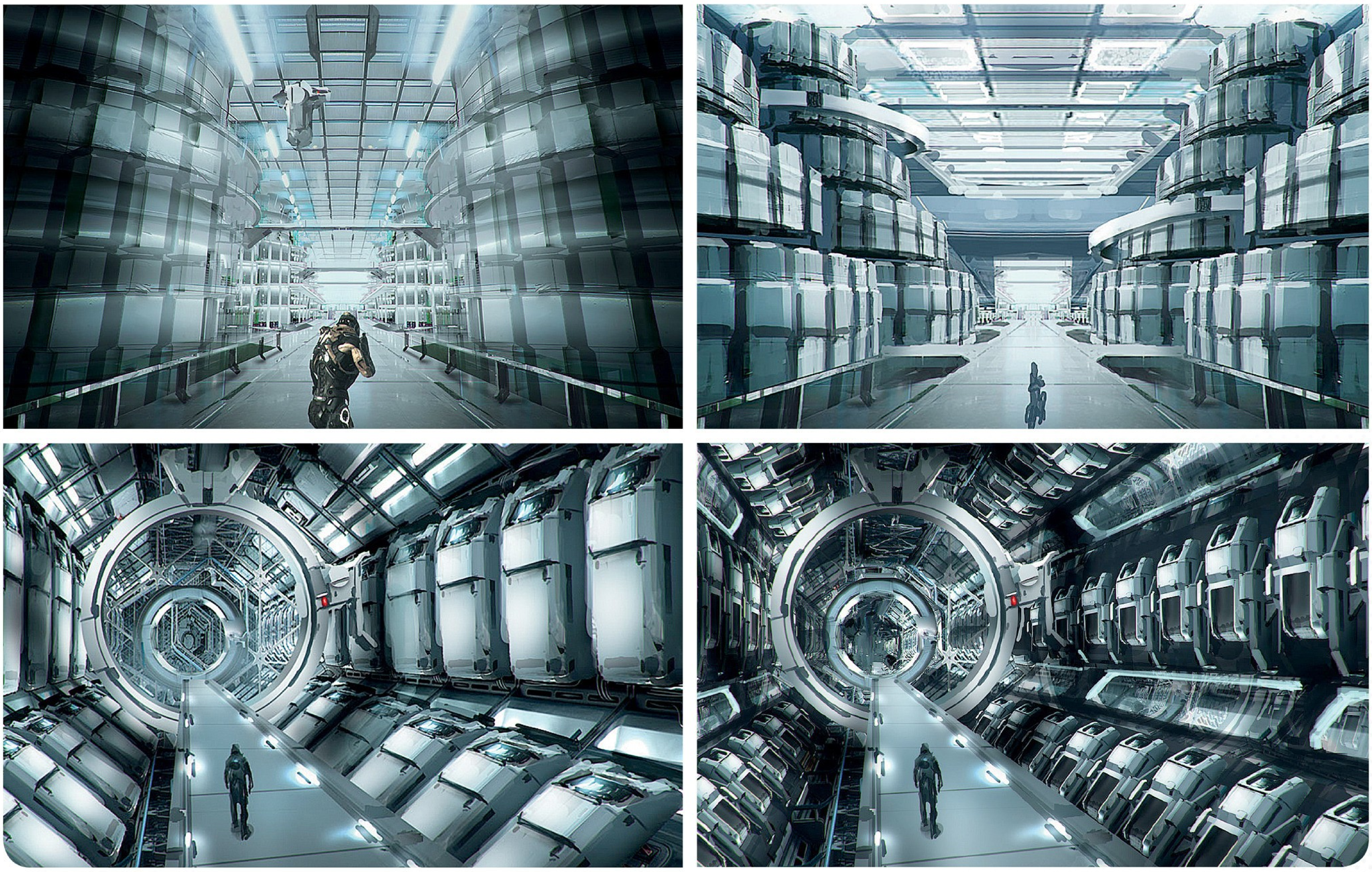
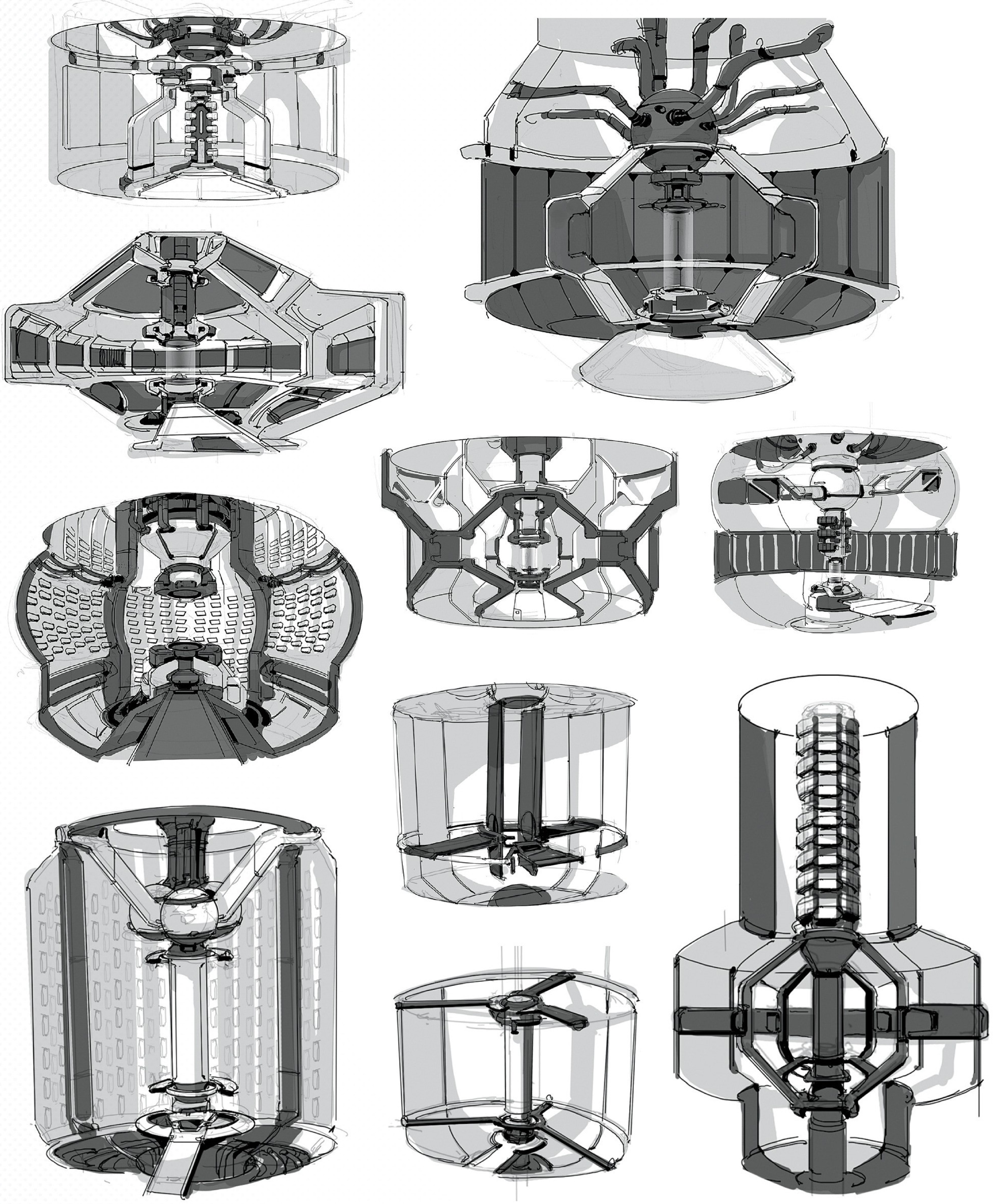


JM: These were our initial concepts for both the Nexus operations center and the *Hyperion* bridge. The vistas looking out the front bay windows would be the point of interest for each room. For the ops center, we wanted to keep the layout fairly organic, so we decided to use the radial floor plan.

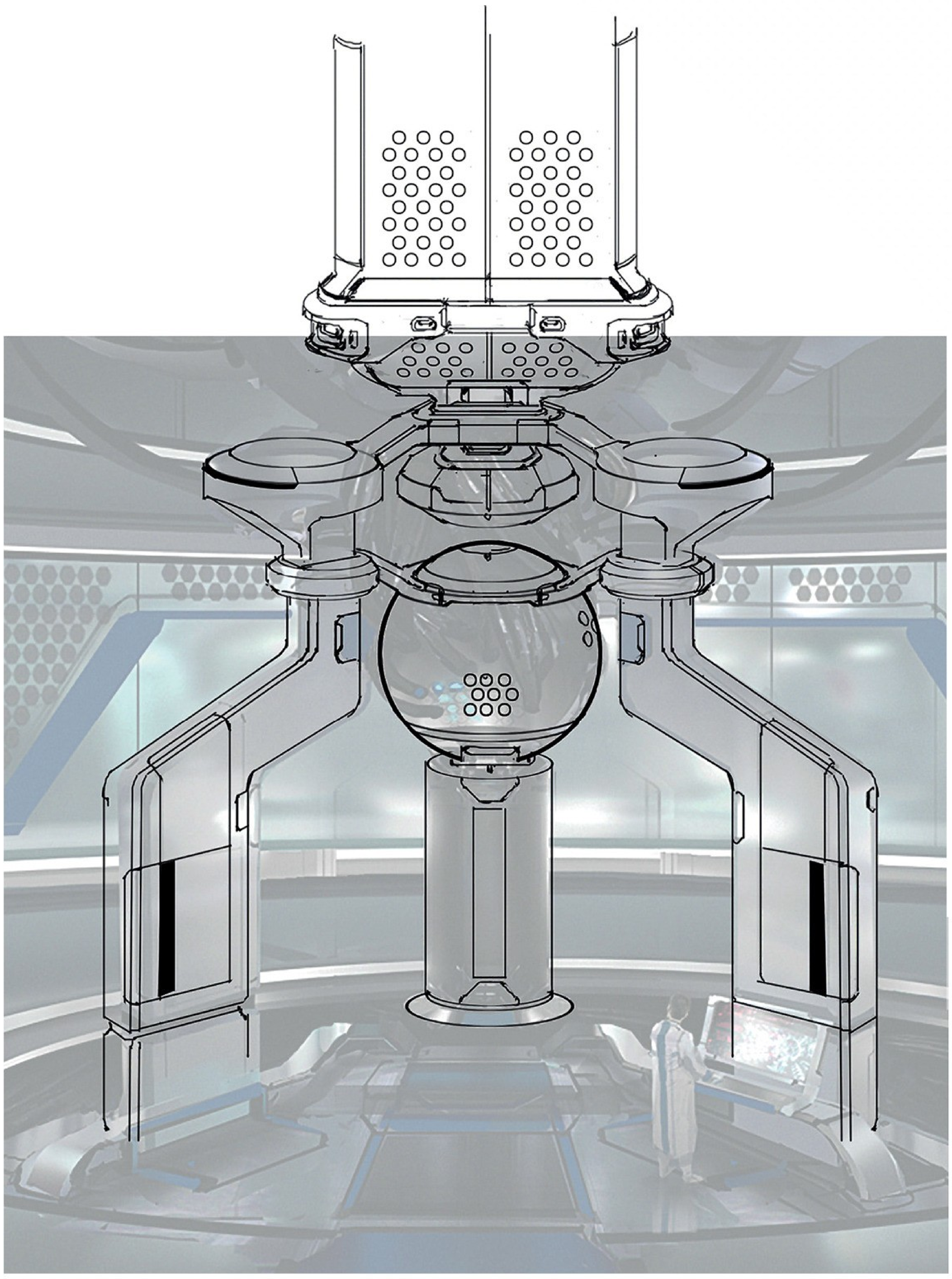


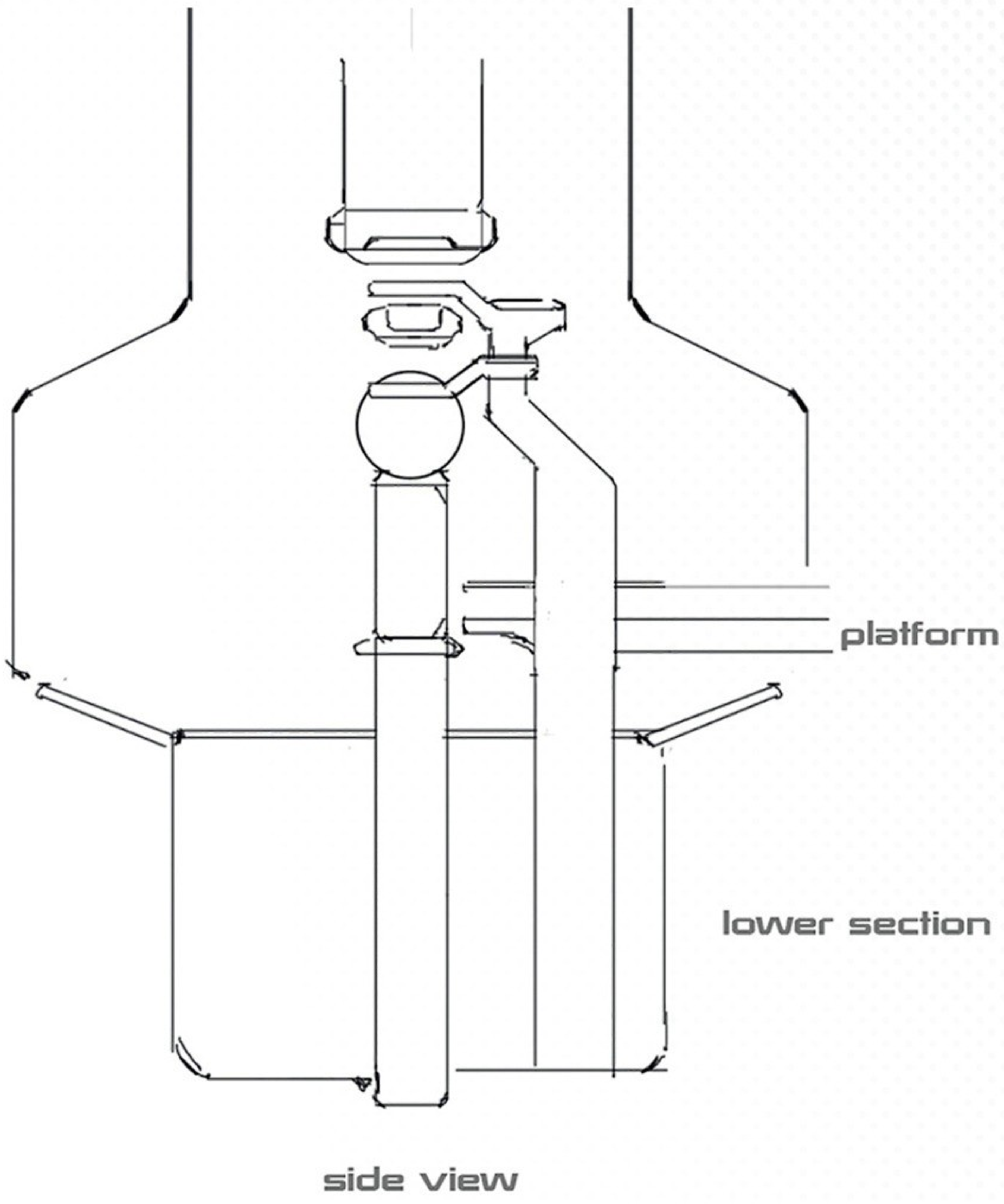


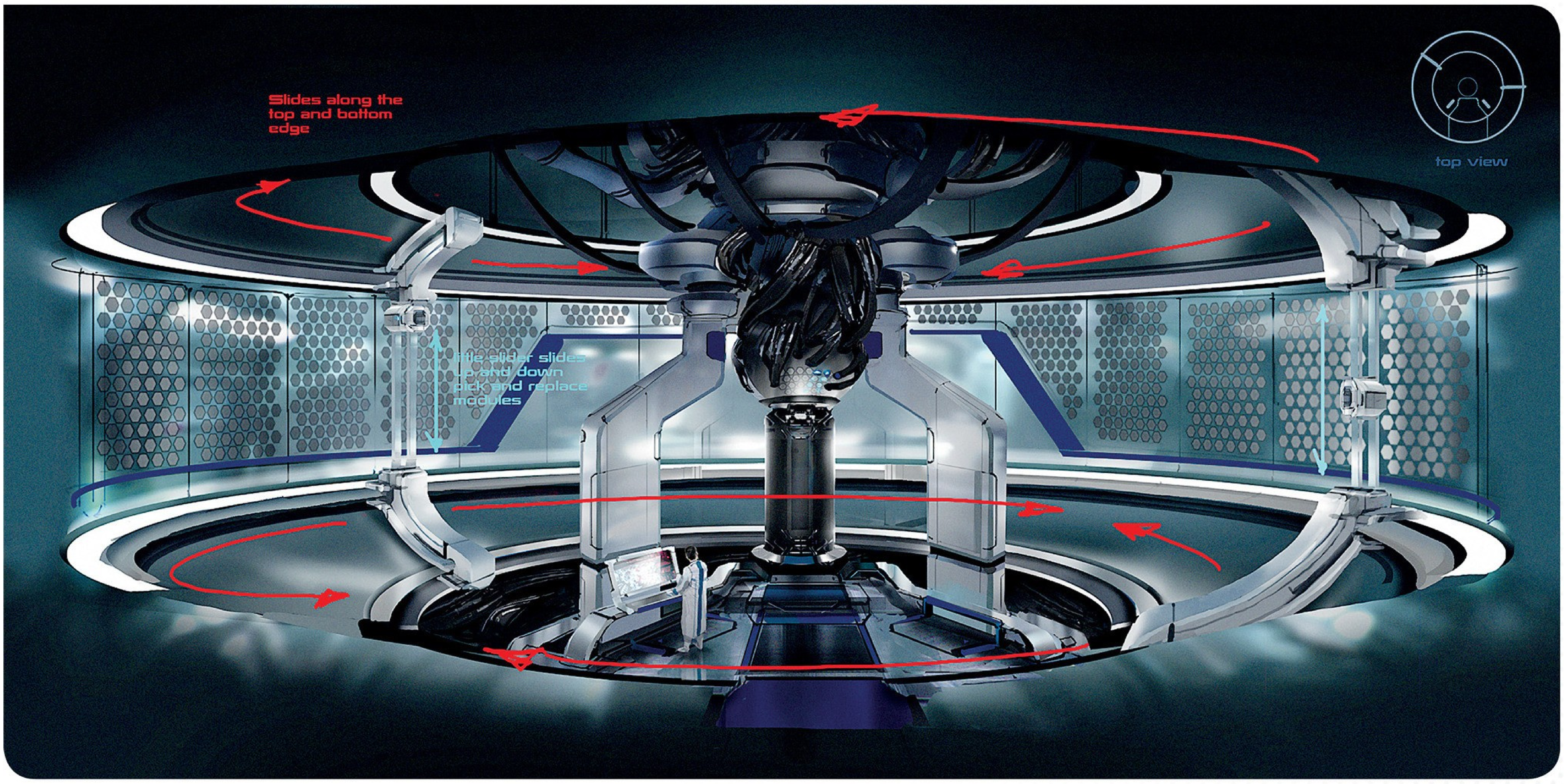
JM: Above is the meeting room concept for the *Tempest*. The main hook for this area was the wide panoramic window that encompassed the room. Having a full 360-degree view updated with each system within which the *Tempest* is parked would provide plenty of variety each time we revisited this room. All of the elements and designs within the room would echo this shape. Below are the early sketches of what would eventually be our *Hyperion* cryogenics bay. This was the first major set piece we'd see in the game, so it was important for it to have a memorable graphic design, and that it screamed *Mass Effect*!

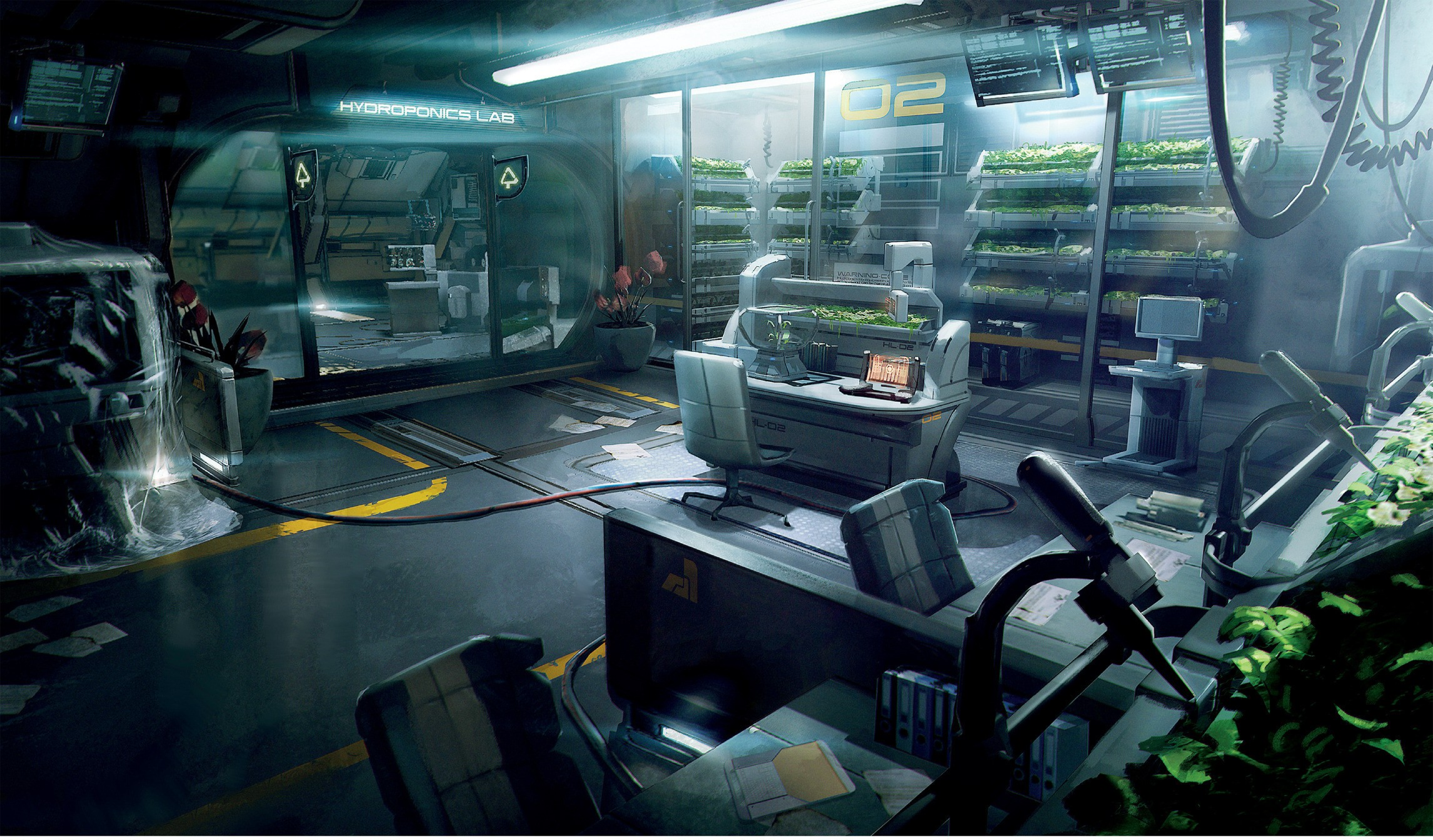


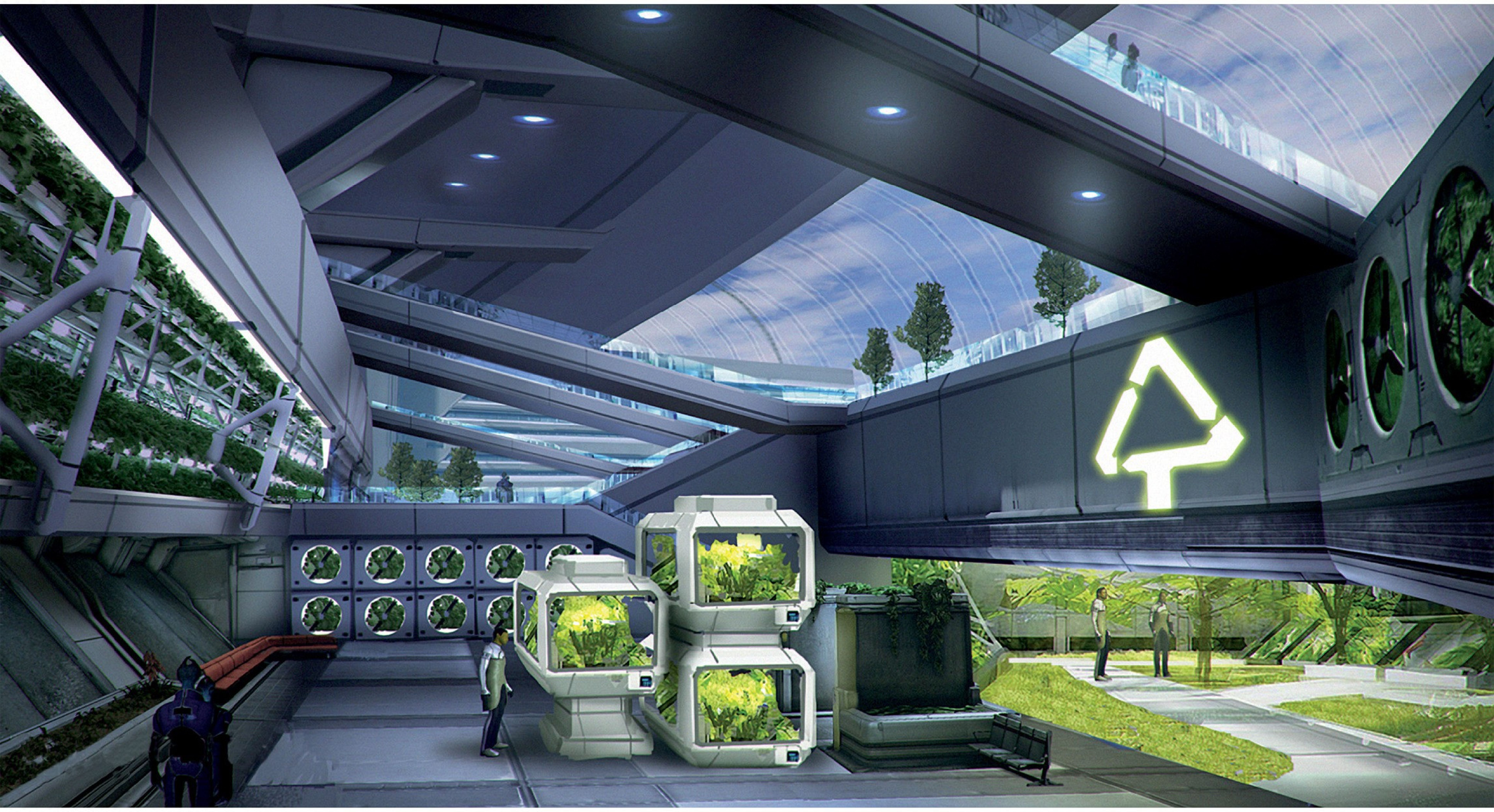
JM: This is the evolution of our SAM node room. From the start we wanted it to be centrally focused, and generally cylindrical. Most of the iteration focused around how we would frame the node itself, particularly because it'd be strongly featured in cinematic scenes.



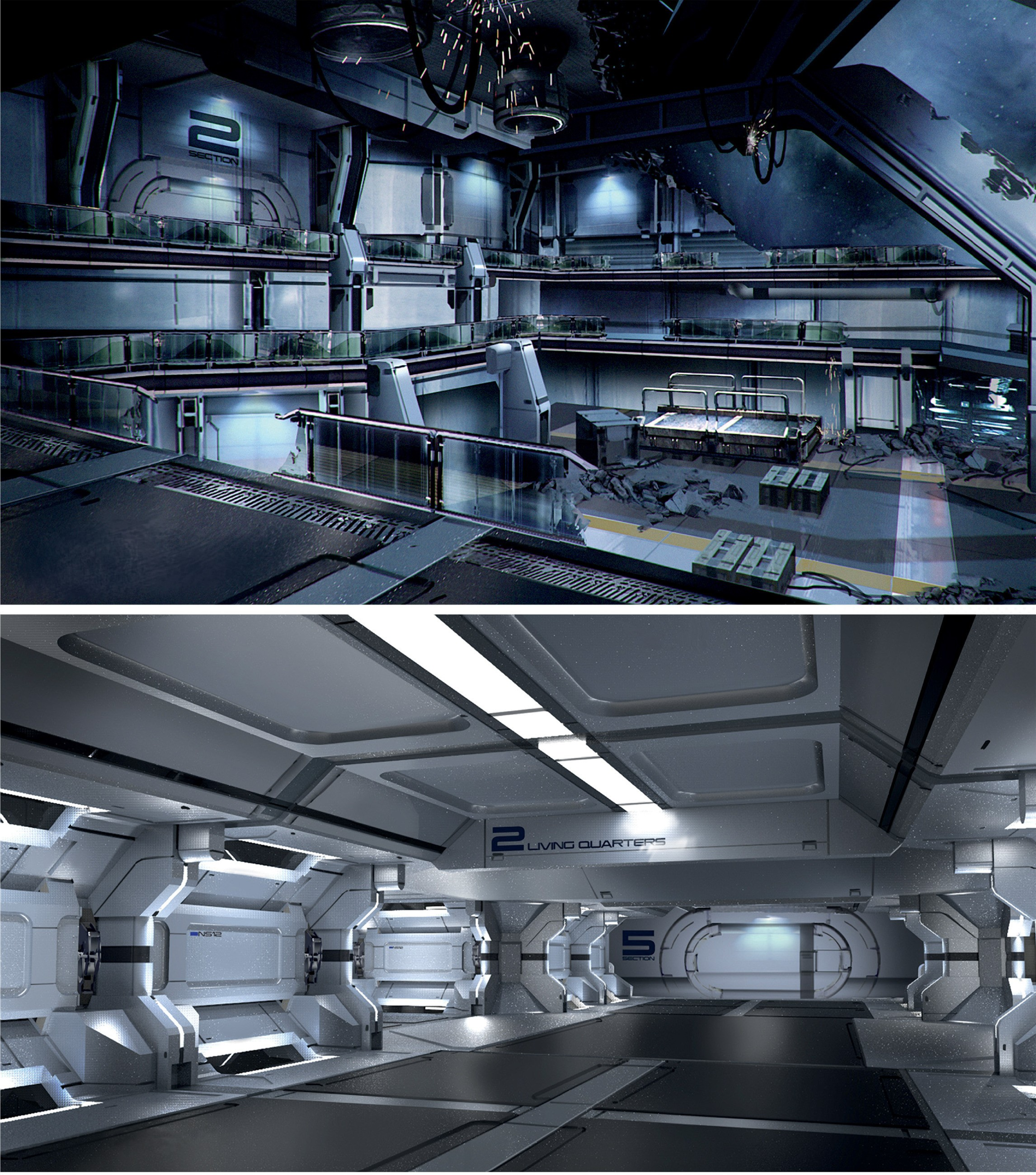

platform
lower section
side view


Slides along the top and bottom edge
top view
little slider slides up and down pick and replace modules

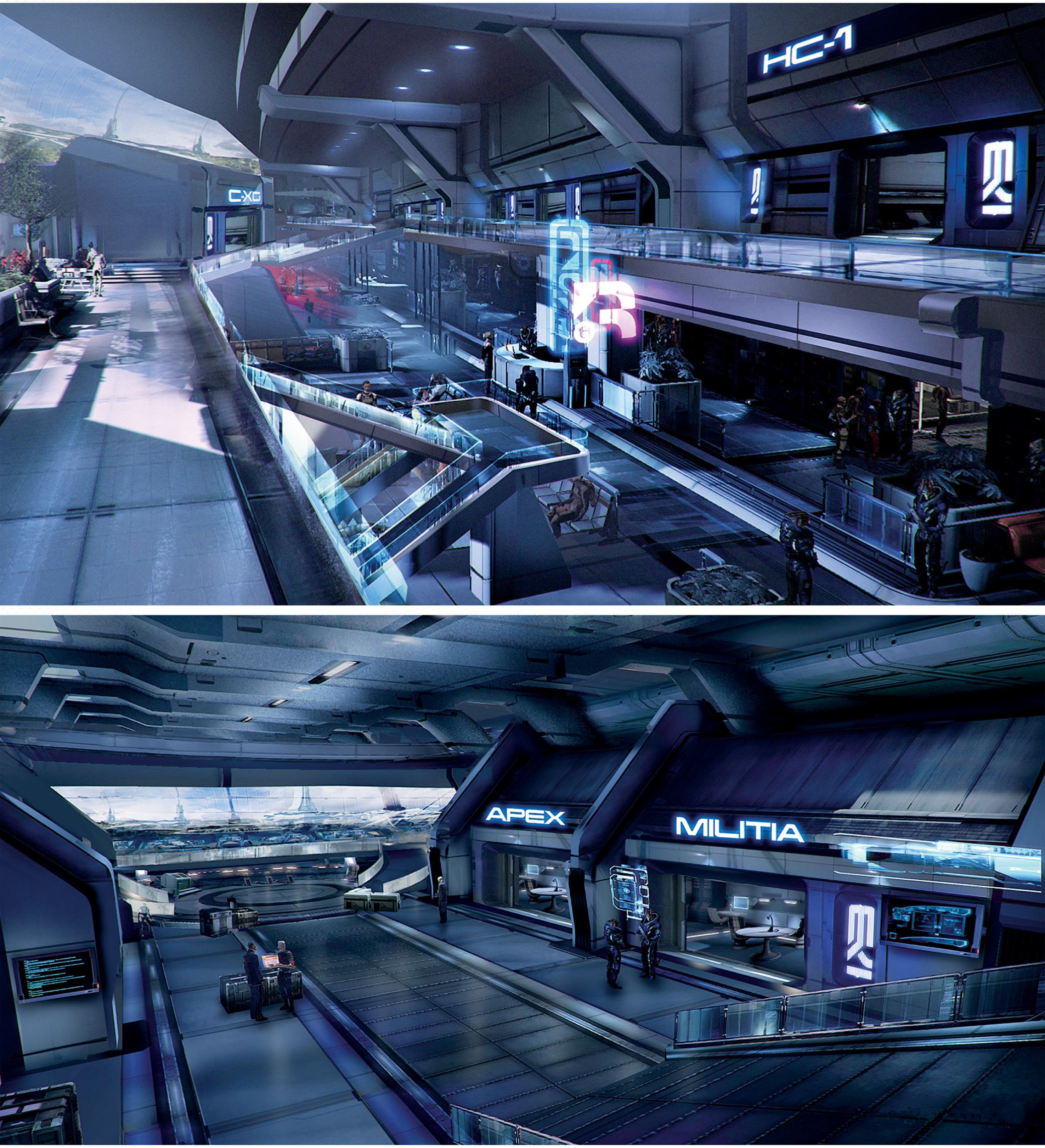




Kenneth Fairclough: There are outpost pods throughout the UNCs in *Andromeda*. These modular enclosures make up much of the architecture in newly established outposts. This concept was done in order to flesh out how the interior of one of these pods can be populated with props to give it a unique identity. These types of concepts are also useful for storytelling to ensure the environments feel lived in and tactile. This specific pod was themed after a hydroponic growing lab.

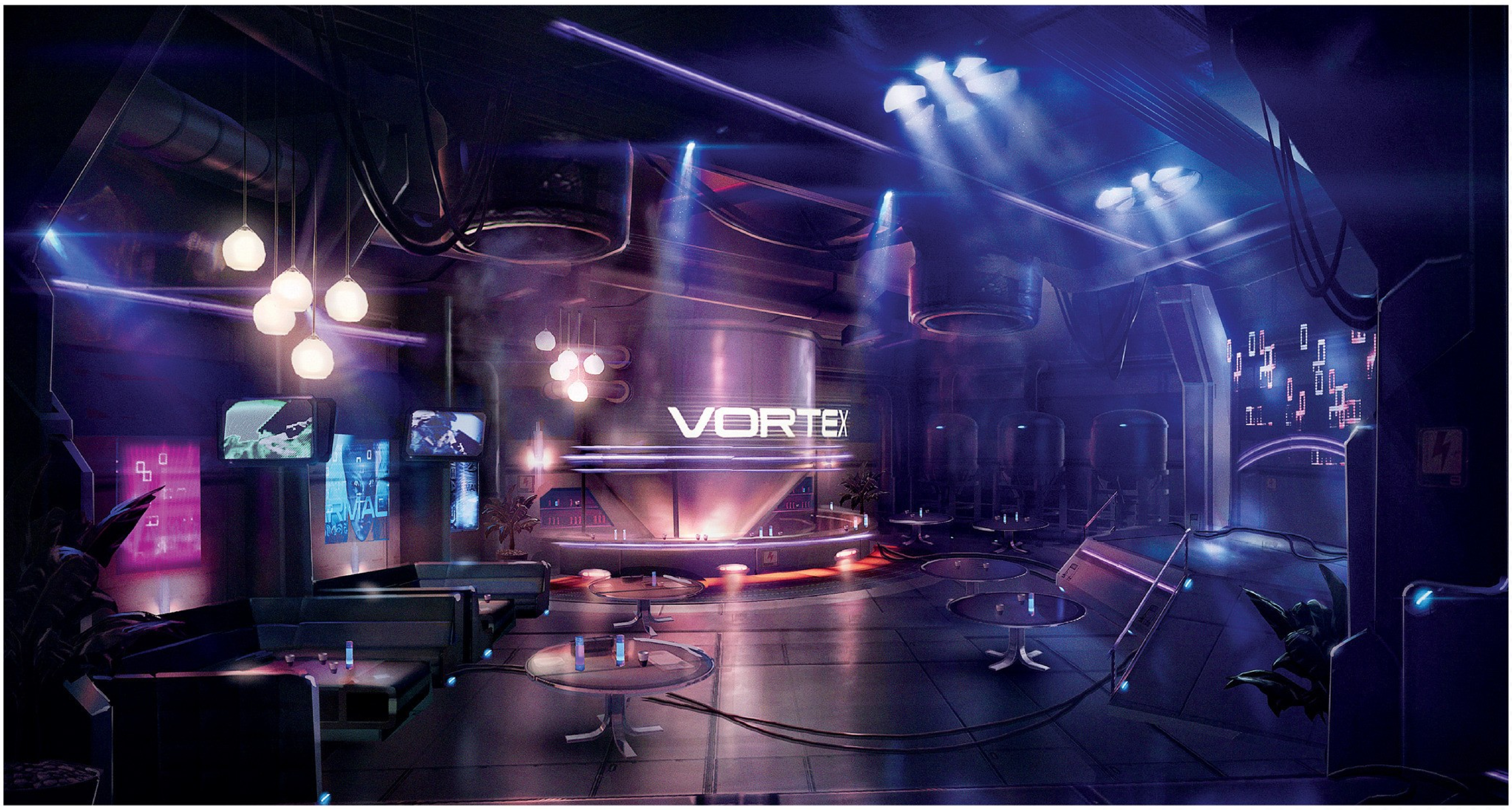


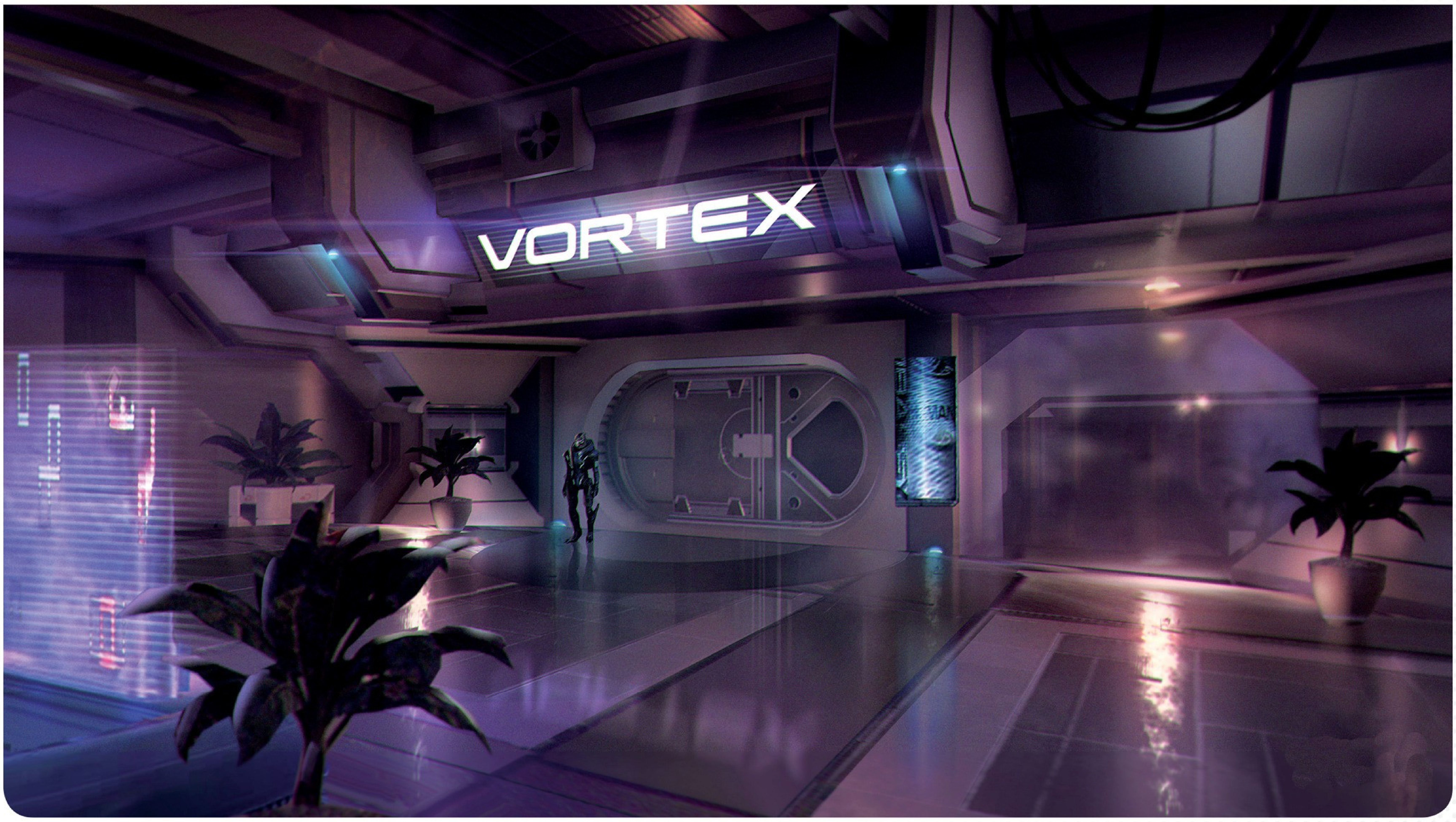
JM: Above is the destroyed cargo bay encountered during Cora's loyalty mission. Below is one of our many corridors on the arks. It was important to hit a balance between clean, simple shapes, while still implying functionality—notice the gear hinge mechanisms next to the pillar bulkheads. These locations would also have slightly varying set decorations for each ark. Things like lighting, logos, and paneling would all be used to show distinction between the human, asari, and salarian arks.

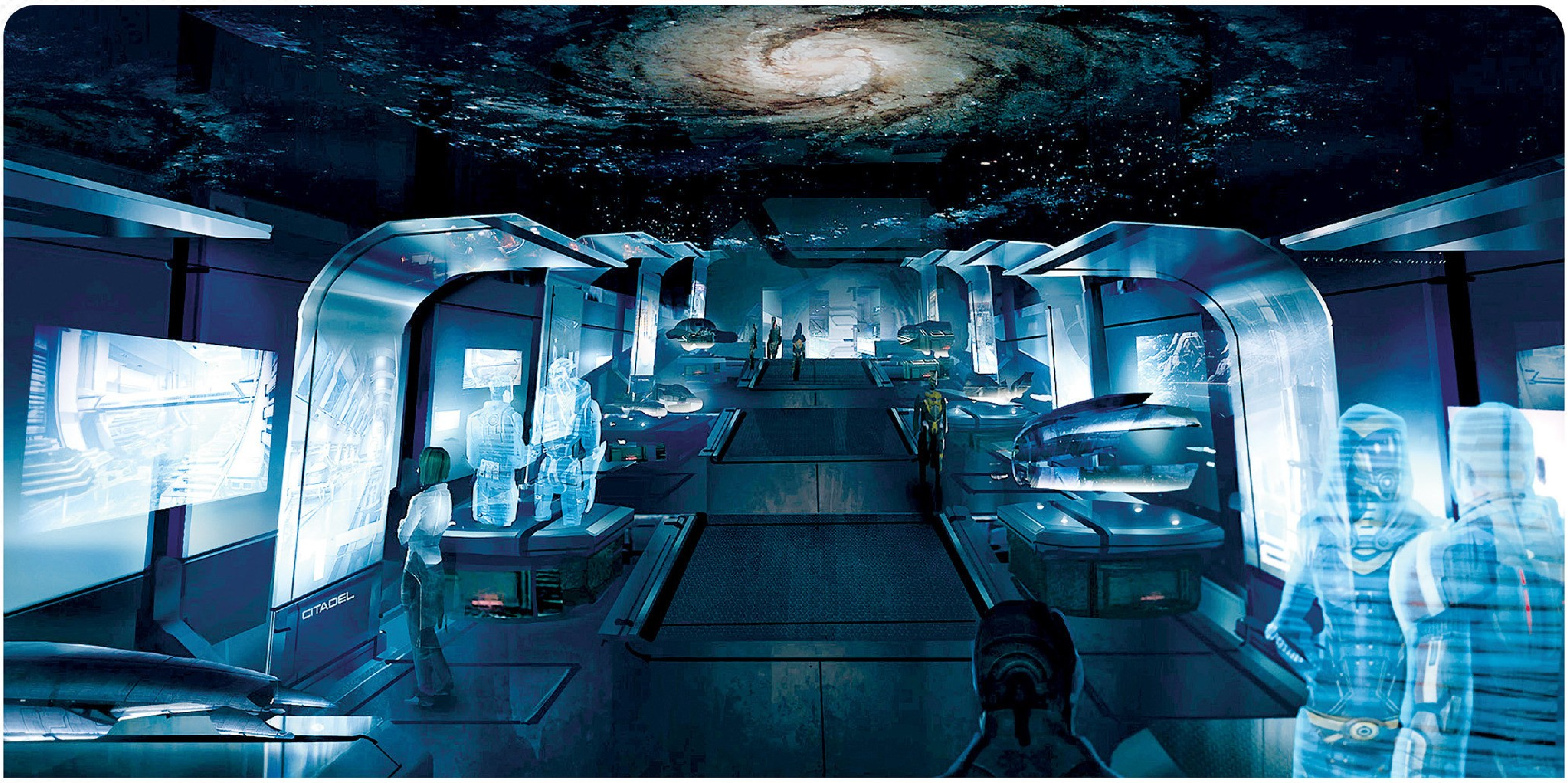


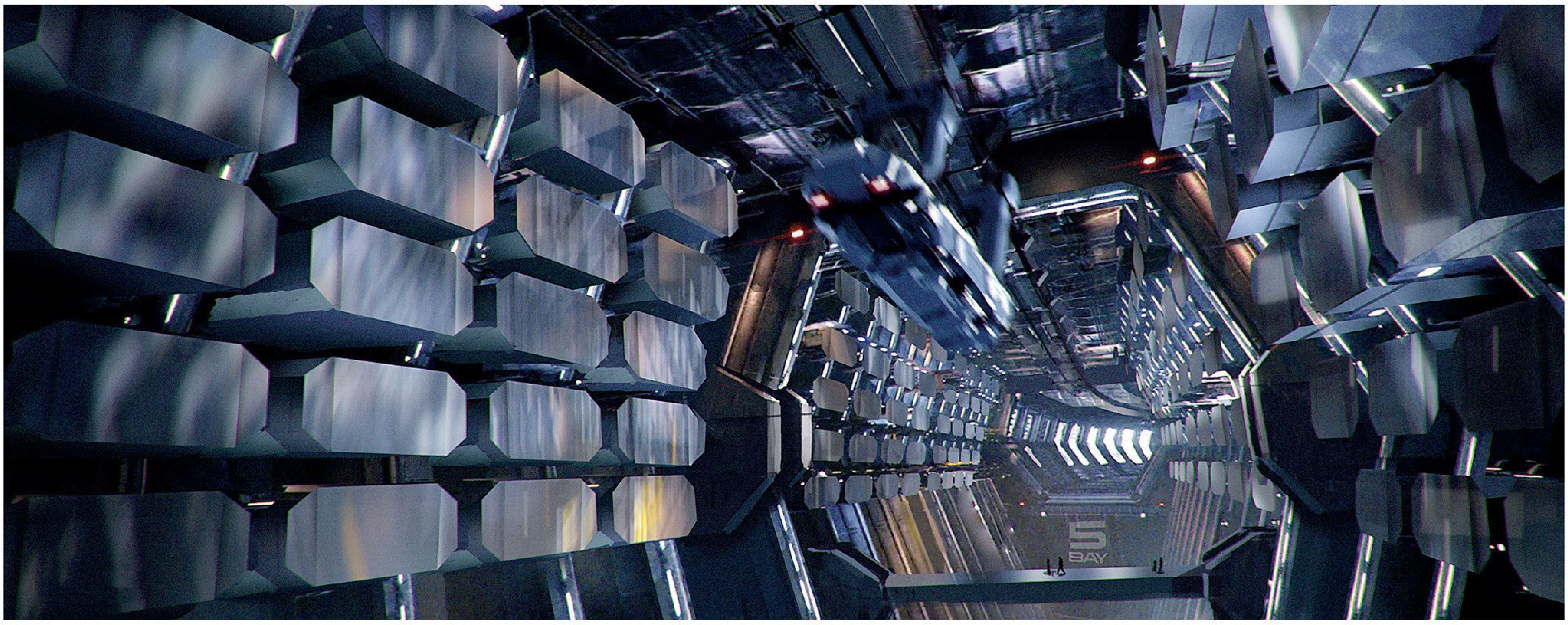
Scotty Brown: *Mass Effect* has one of my favorite art styles, not just because I work on it, but because it pulls from classic eighties sci-fi architecture design and brings a modern take to it.

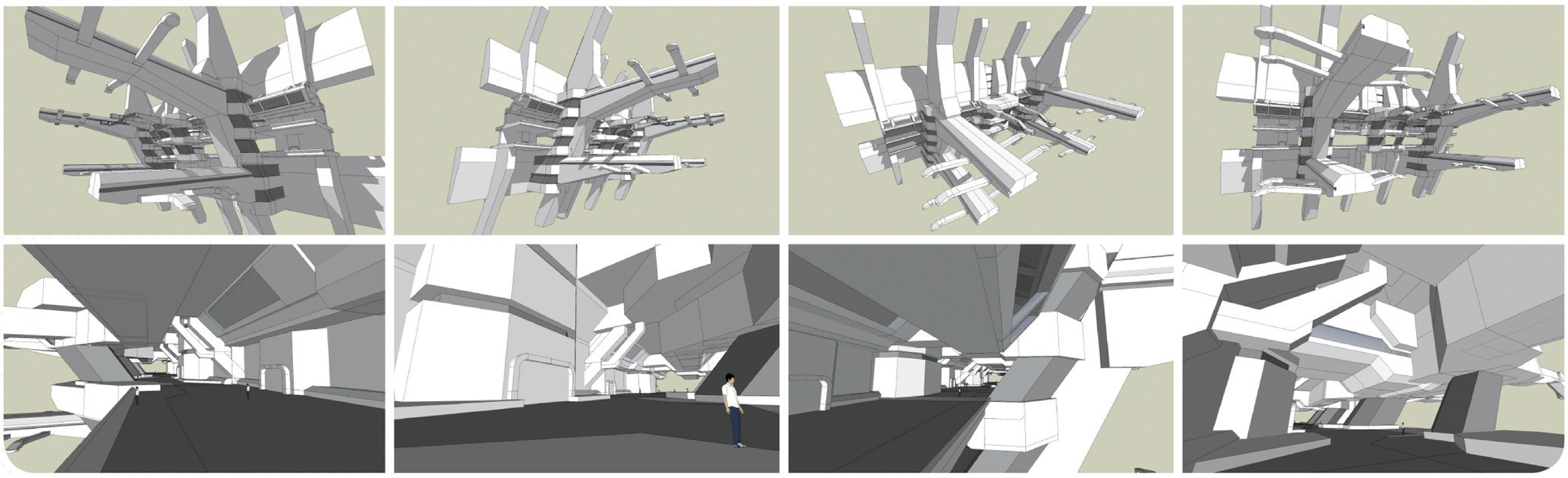
SHIFTY COW


VORTEX

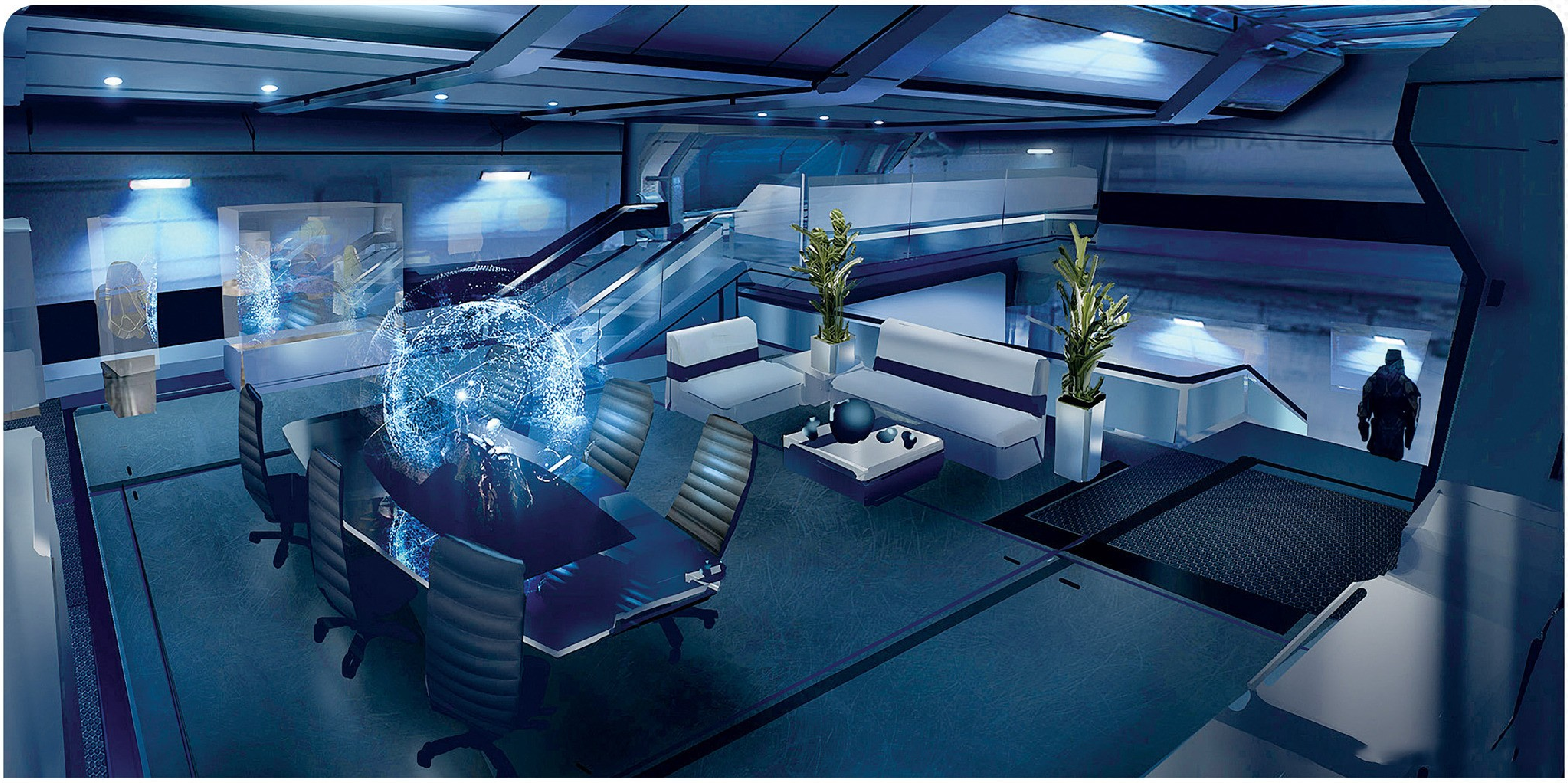

VORTEX

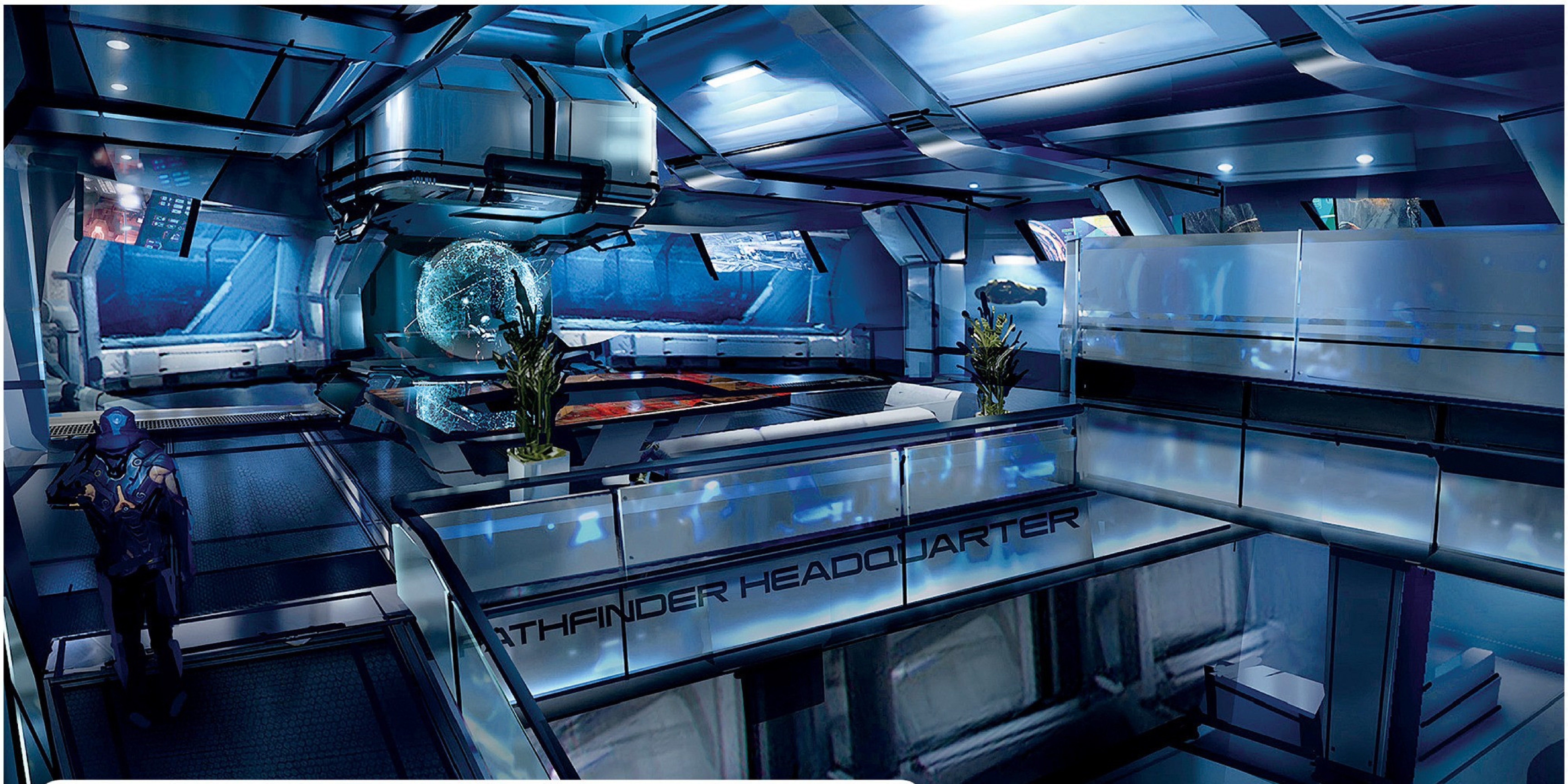


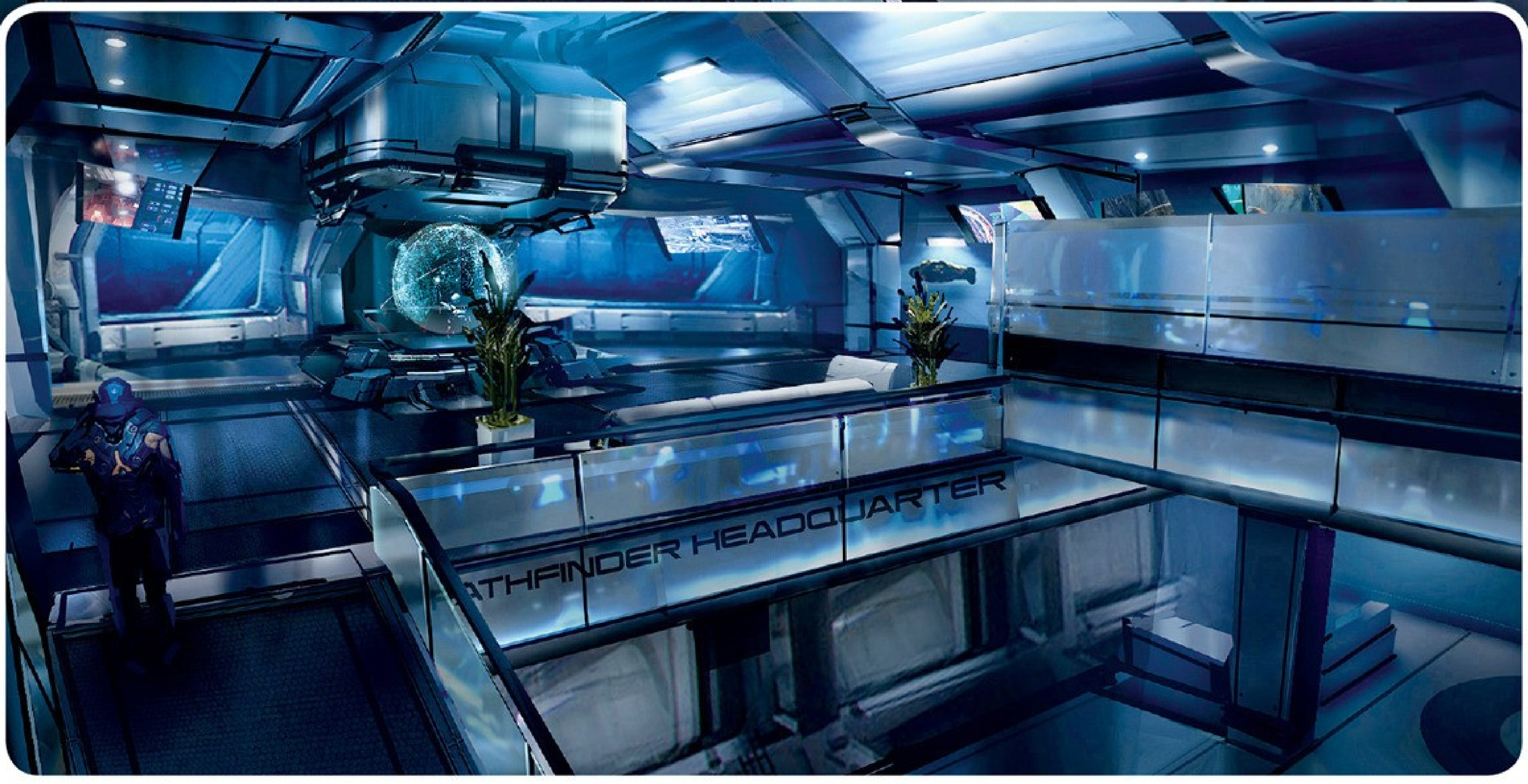




JM: These are various interiors of the Nexus. Above is one of the information halls and in the center we have an early concept of the tram tunnels. Below we have the white box block of the docking bay, which was cut from the final version of the game.



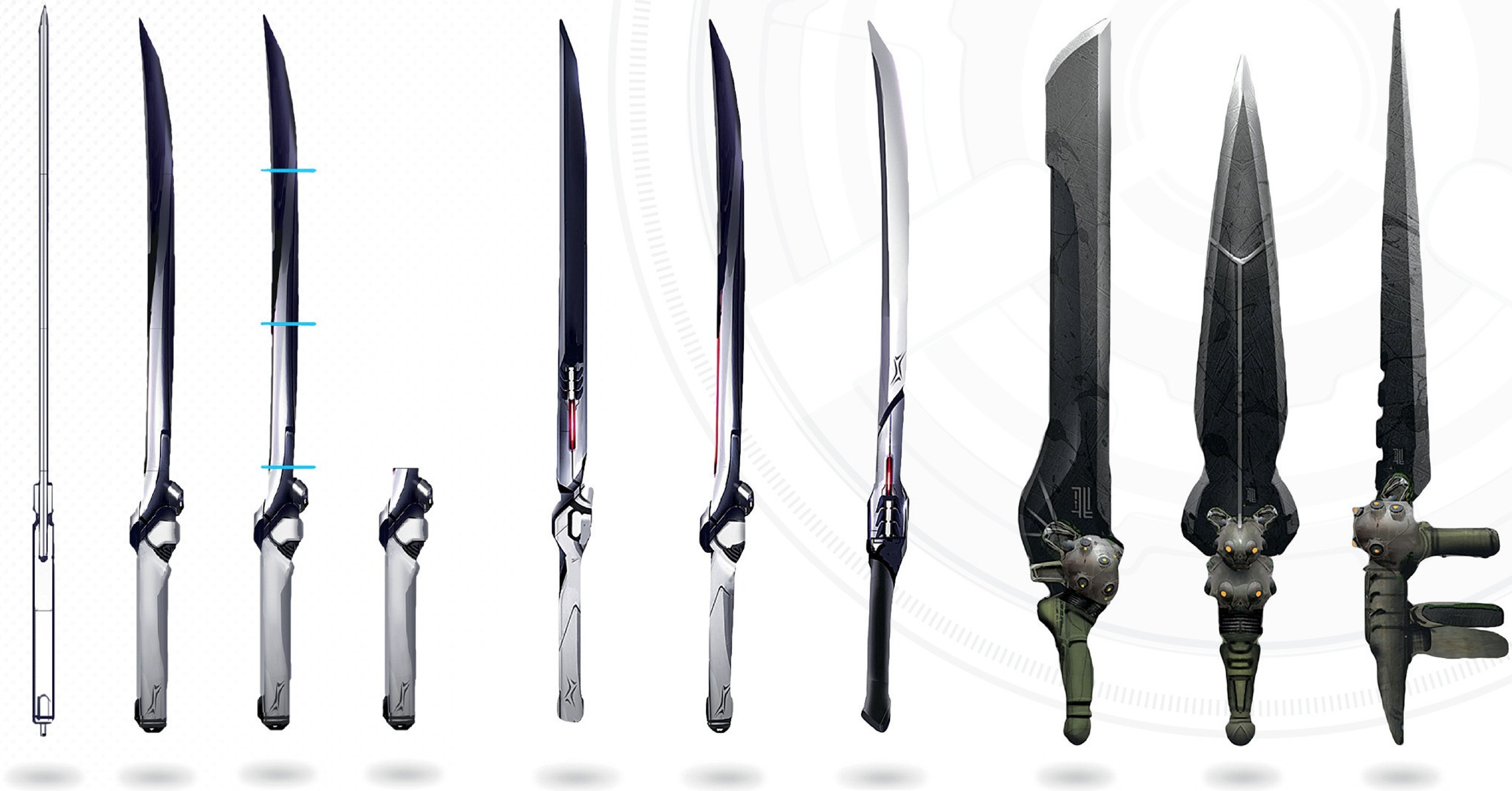

ATHFINDER HEADQUARTER

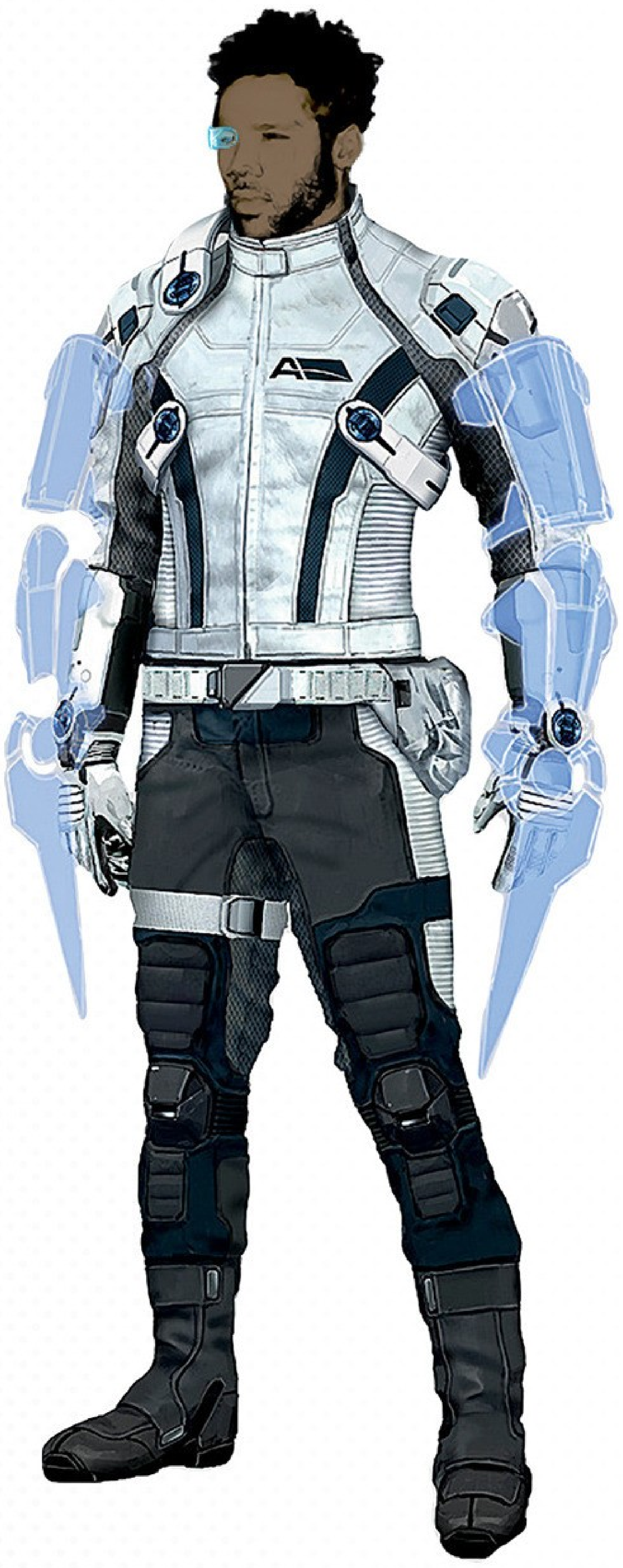

ATHFINDER HEADQUARTER

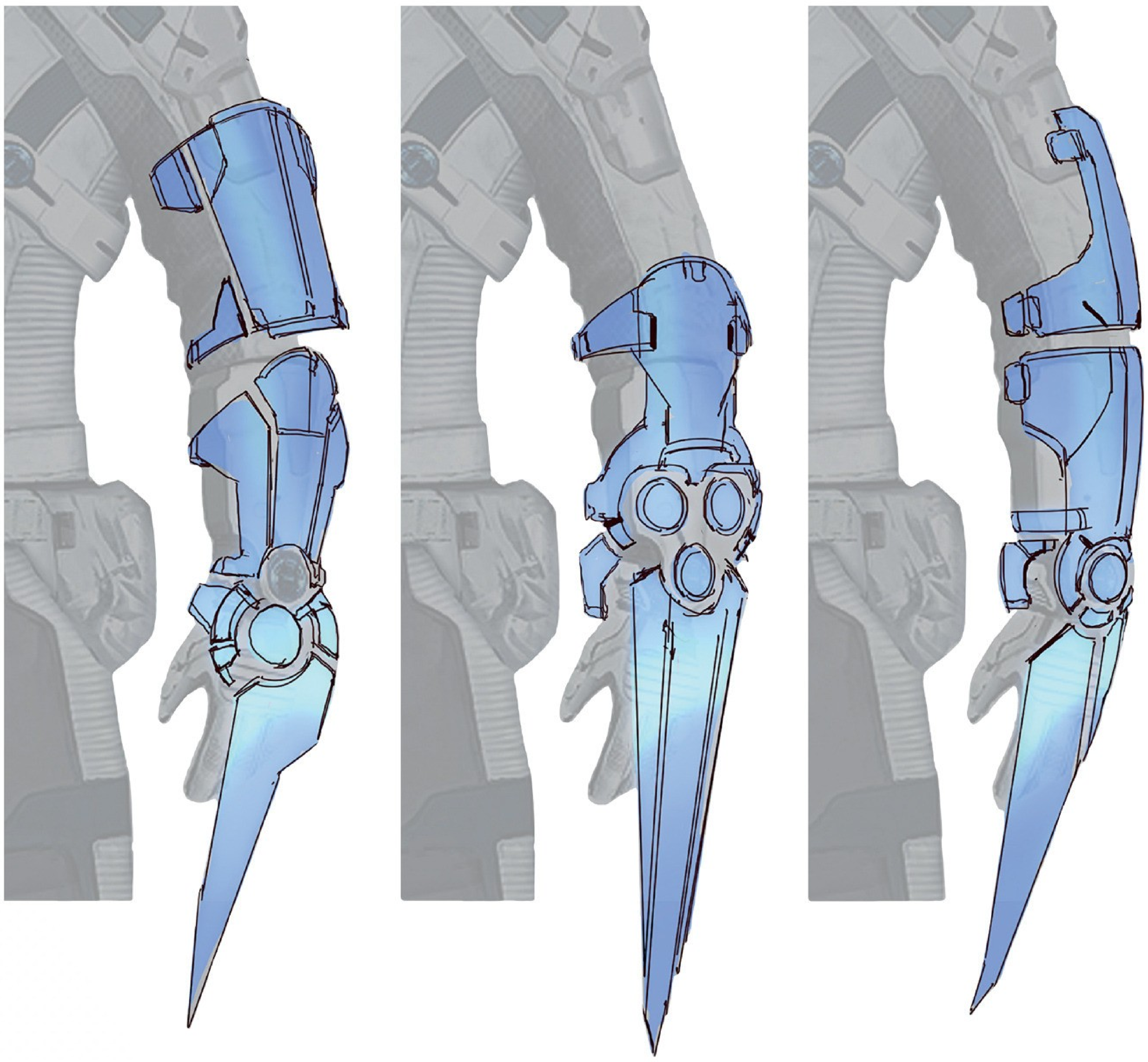
JM: These are the Pathfinder headquarters, where all the different races of Pathfinders would meet up to high-five and drink ale.

EQUIPMENT

THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE

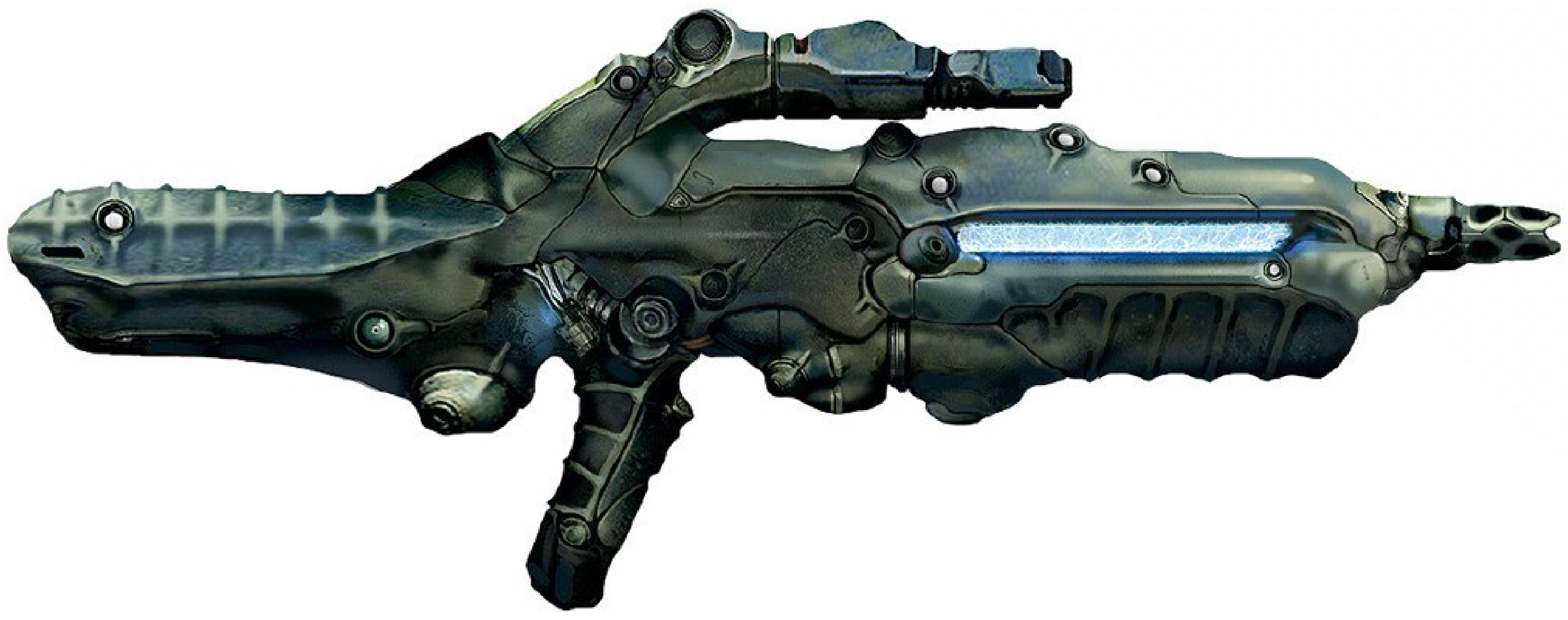


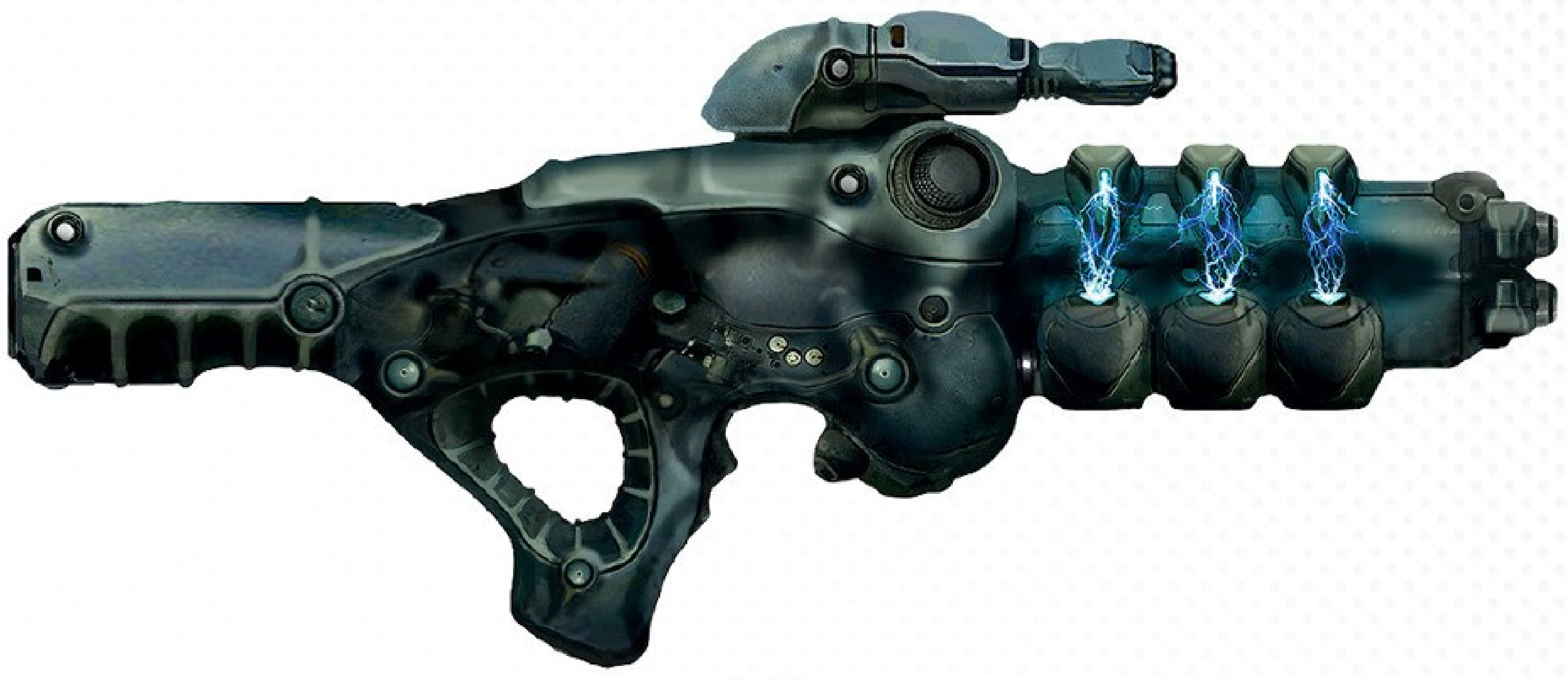


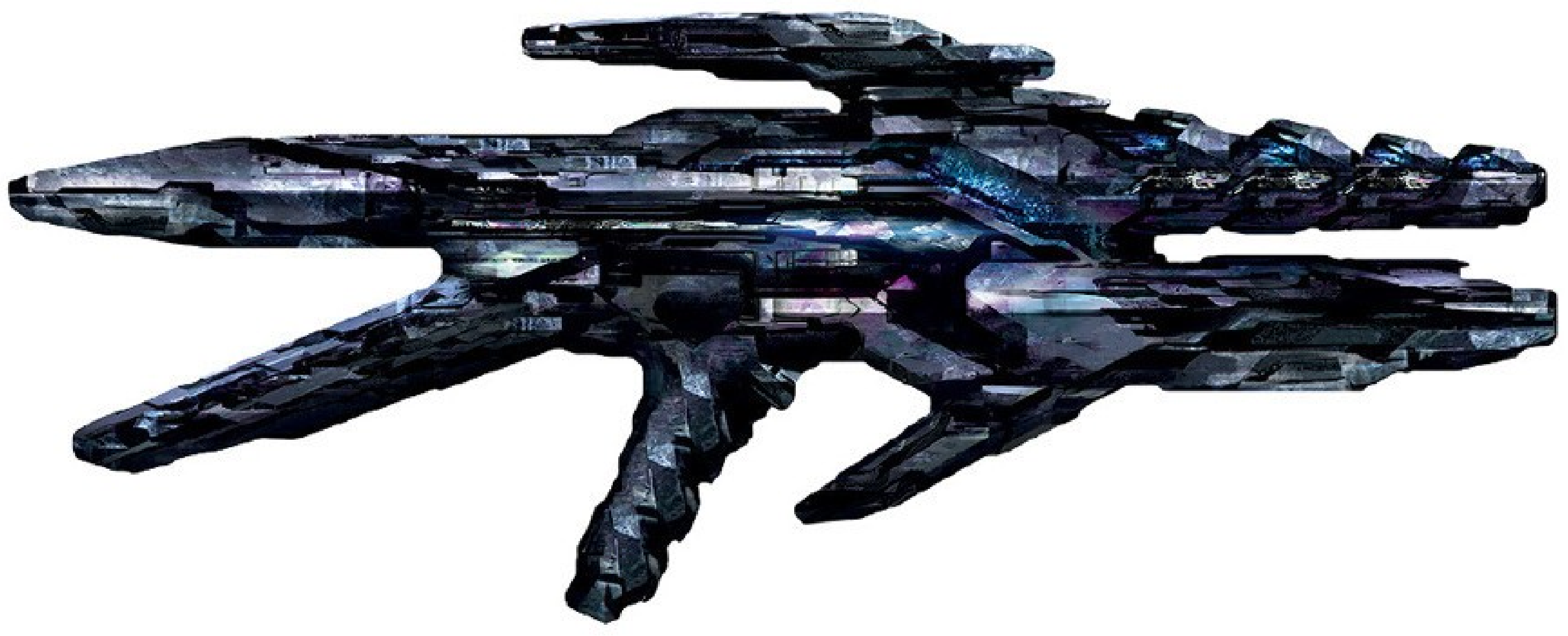


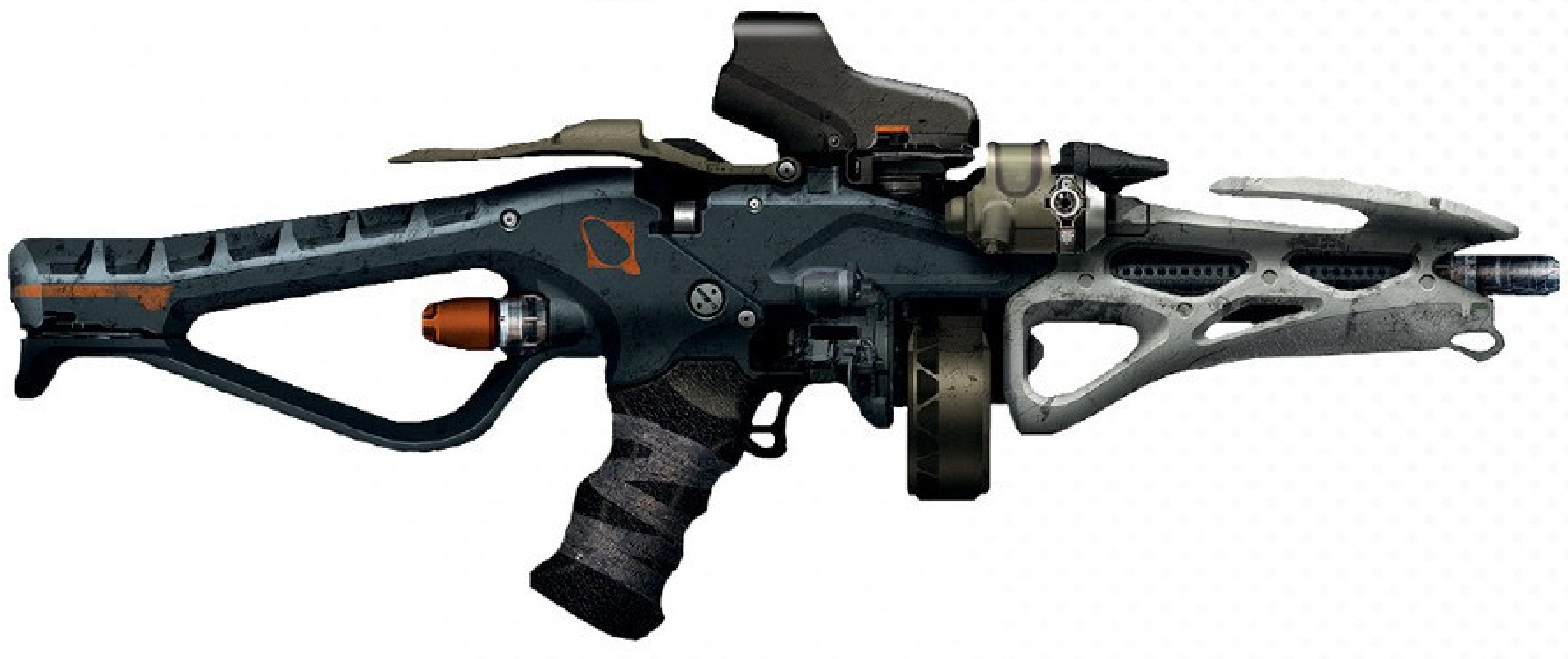
WEAPONS

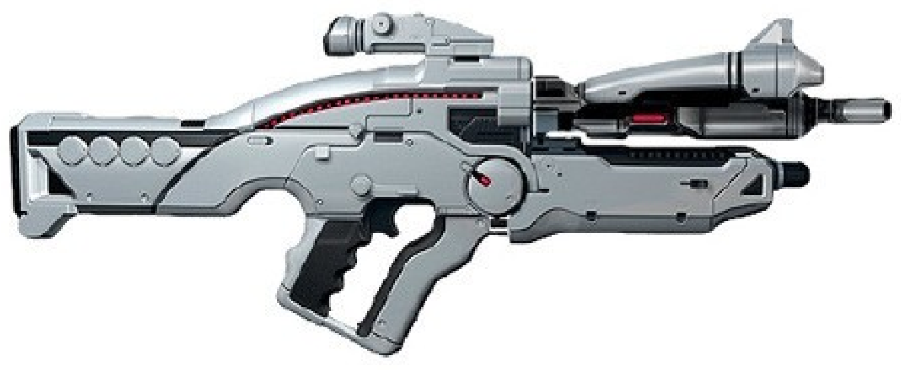
HL: At the top of this page are concepts showing extended and collapsed versions of the melee weapons. The Frostbite engine doesn't allow us to hide pieces of the geometry, so the concepts have to make clear to the modelers how the weapons can collapse into themselves in real space.

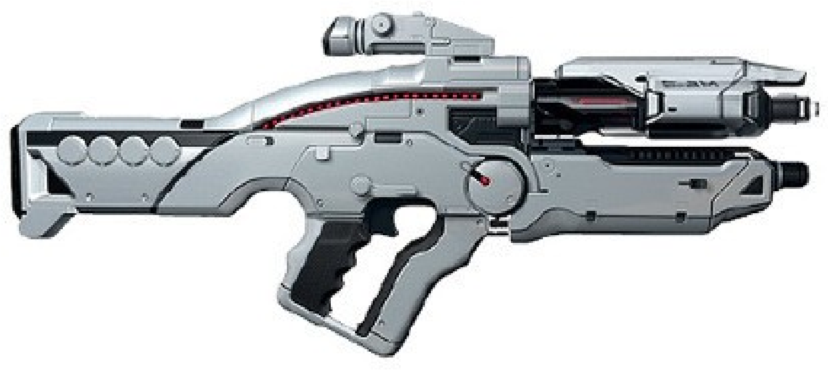


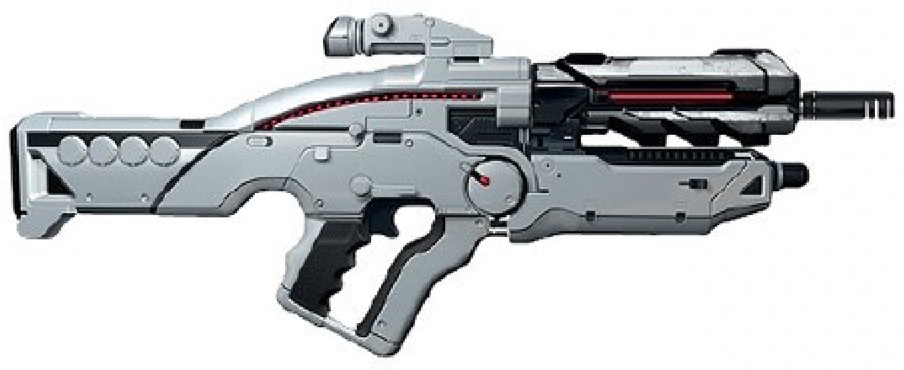


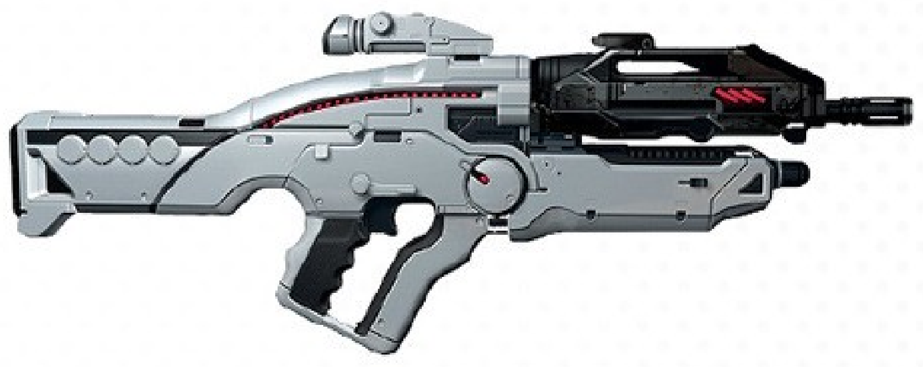


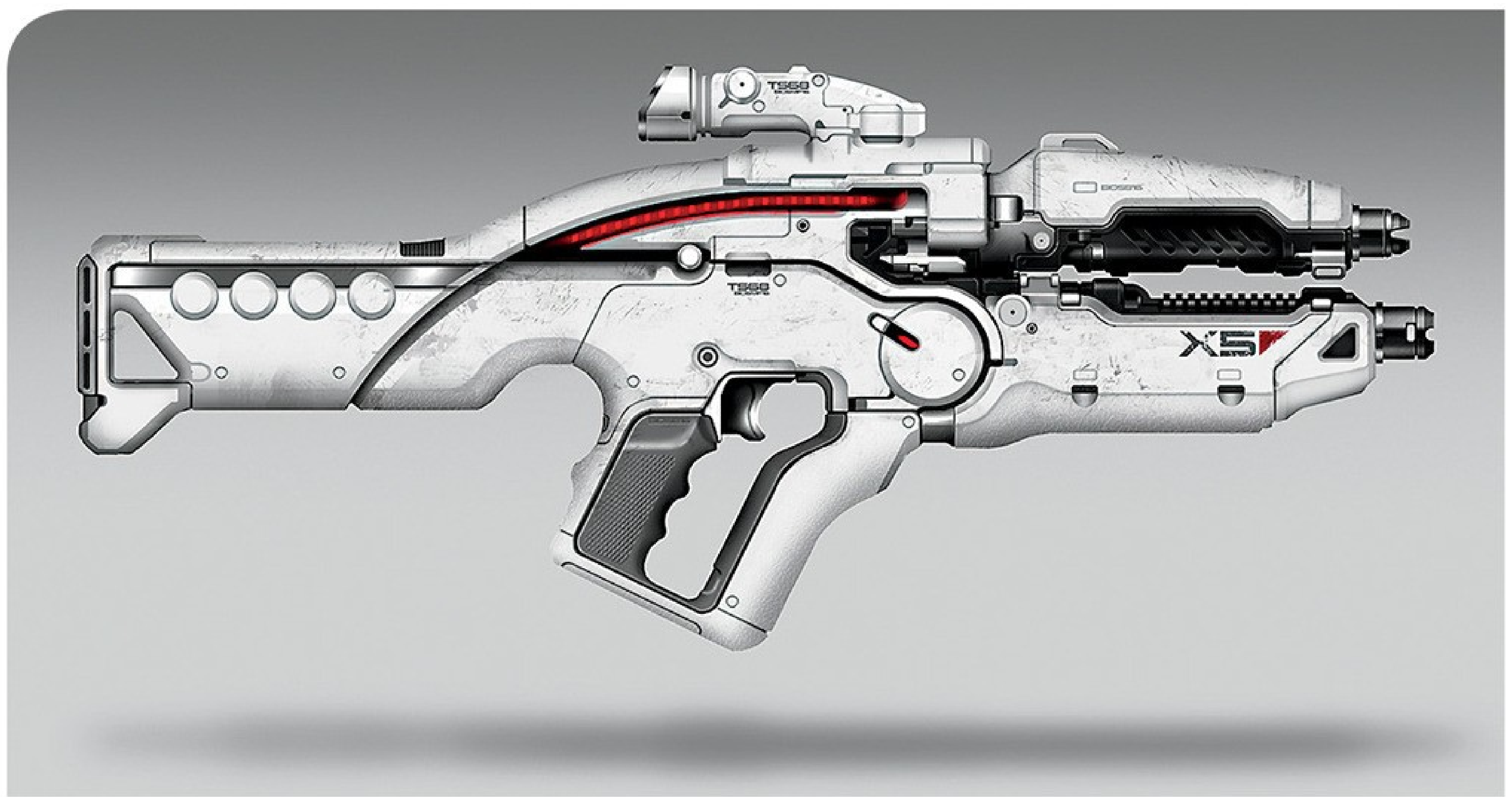


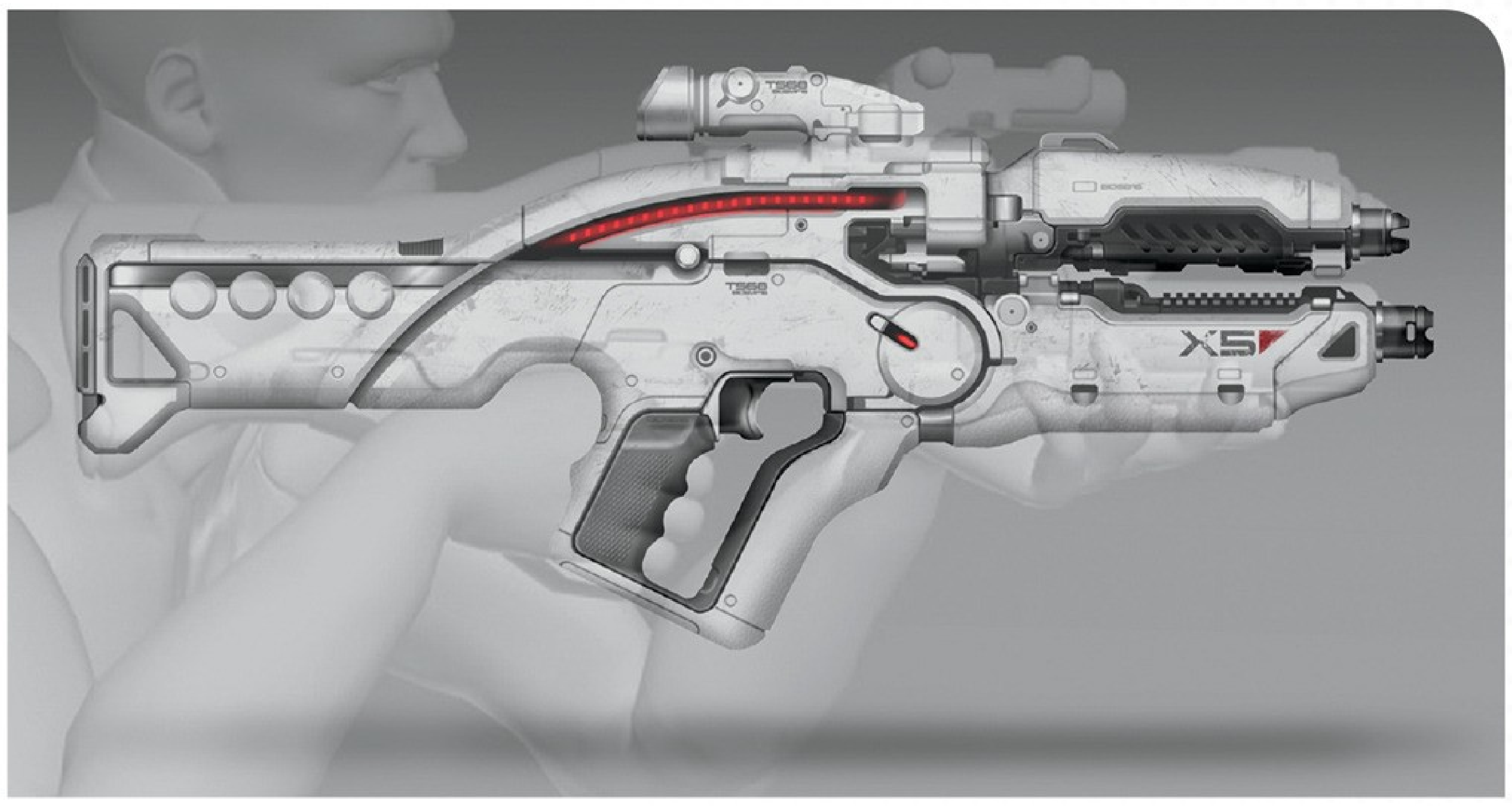


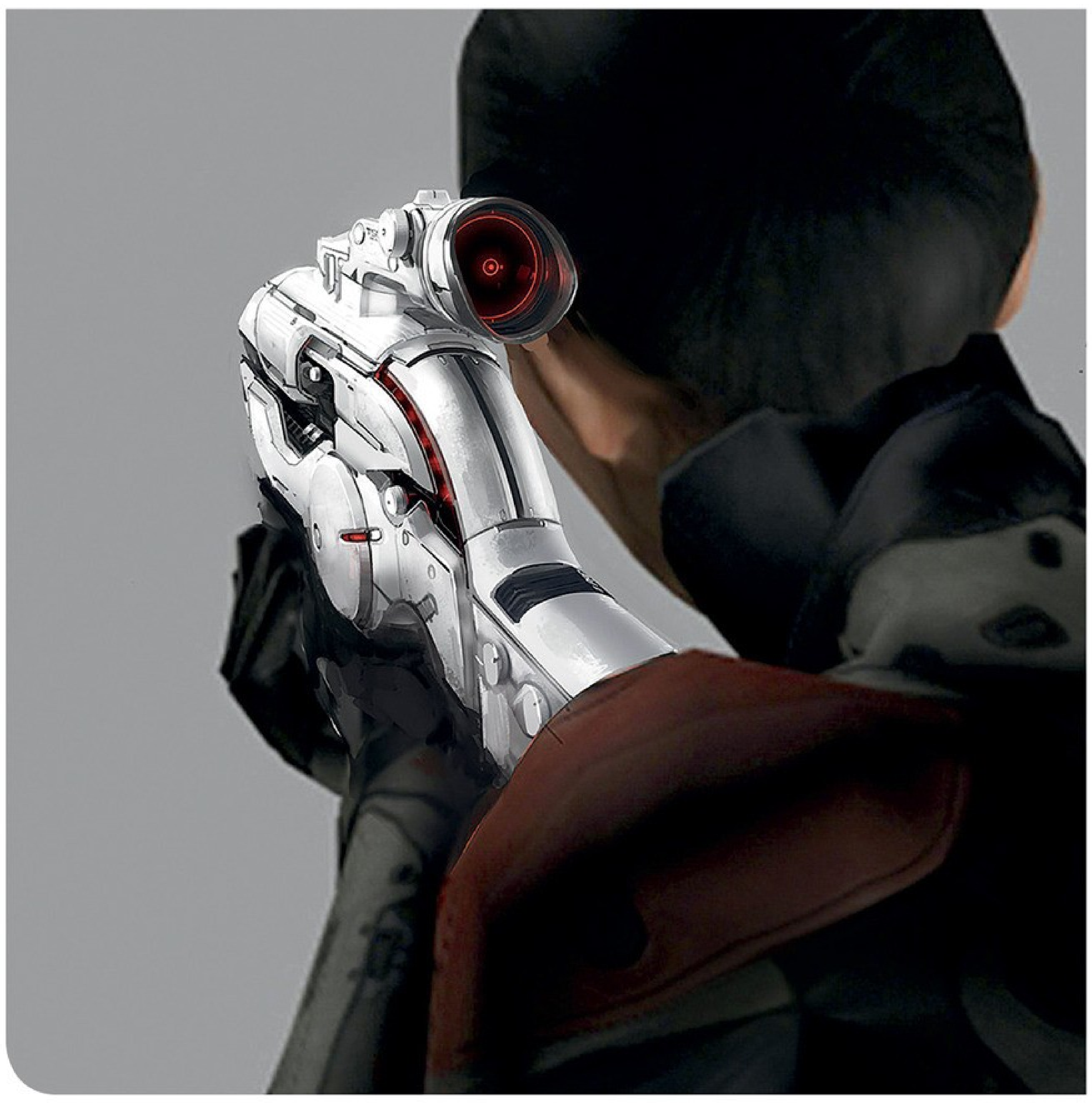


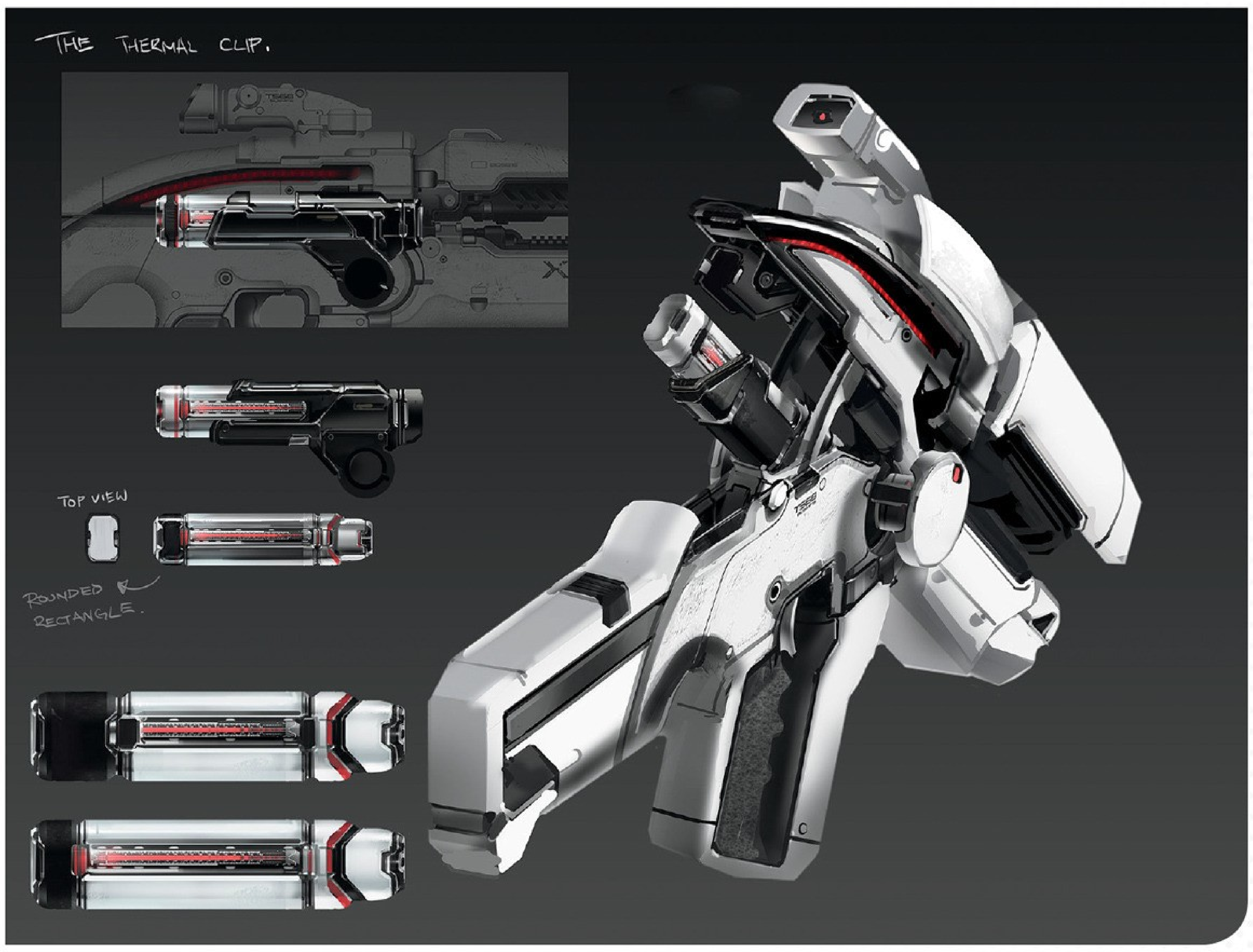




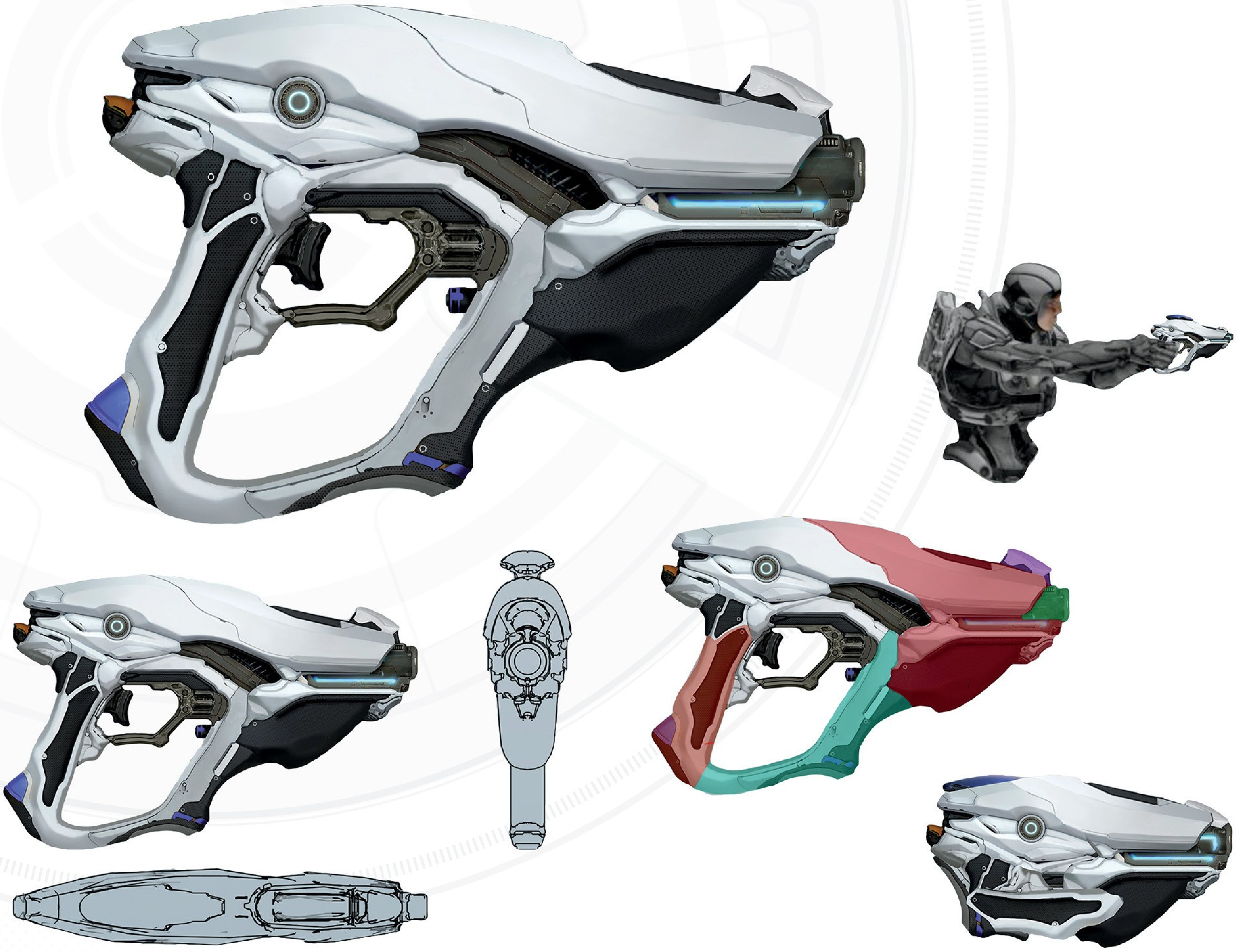


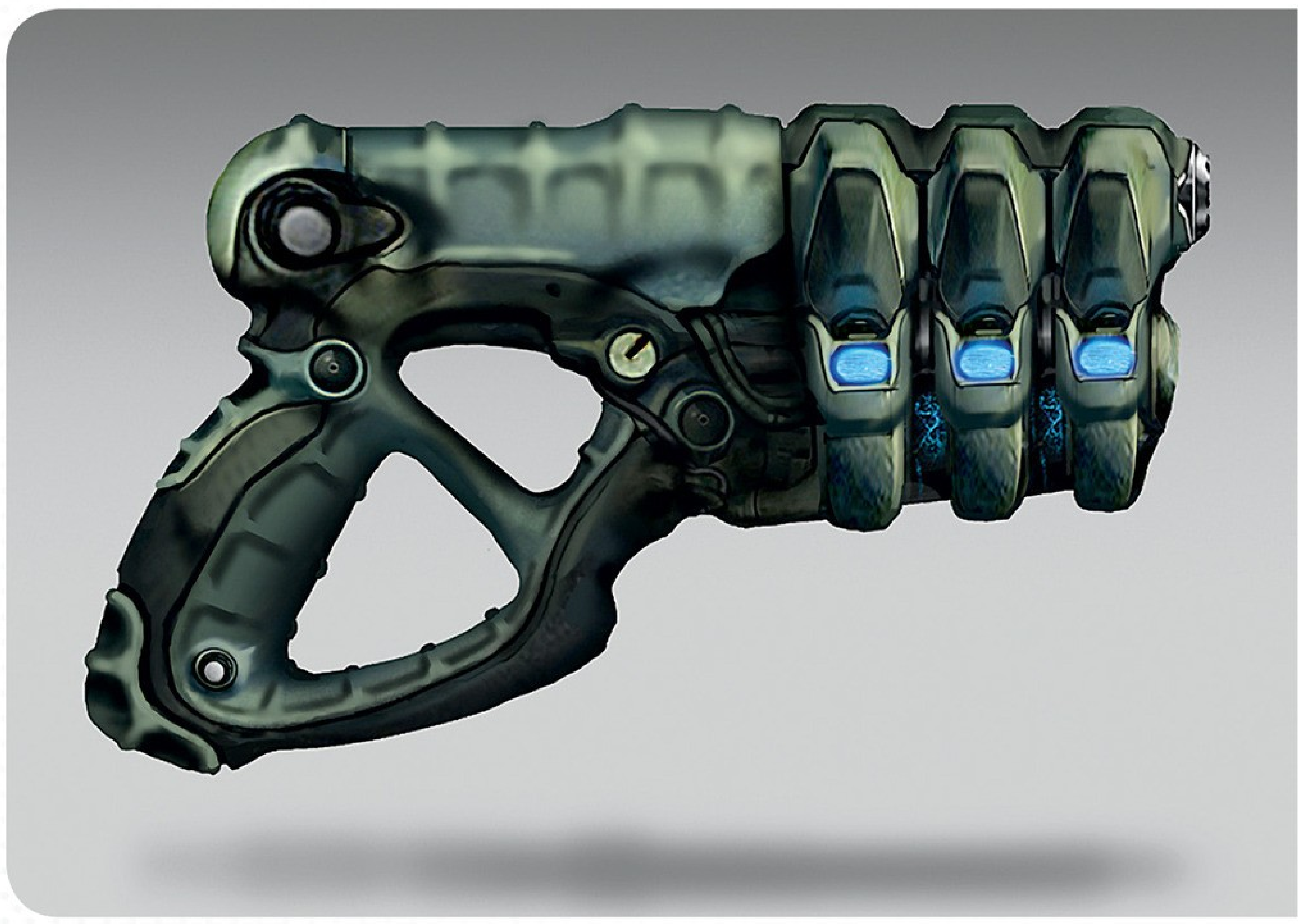


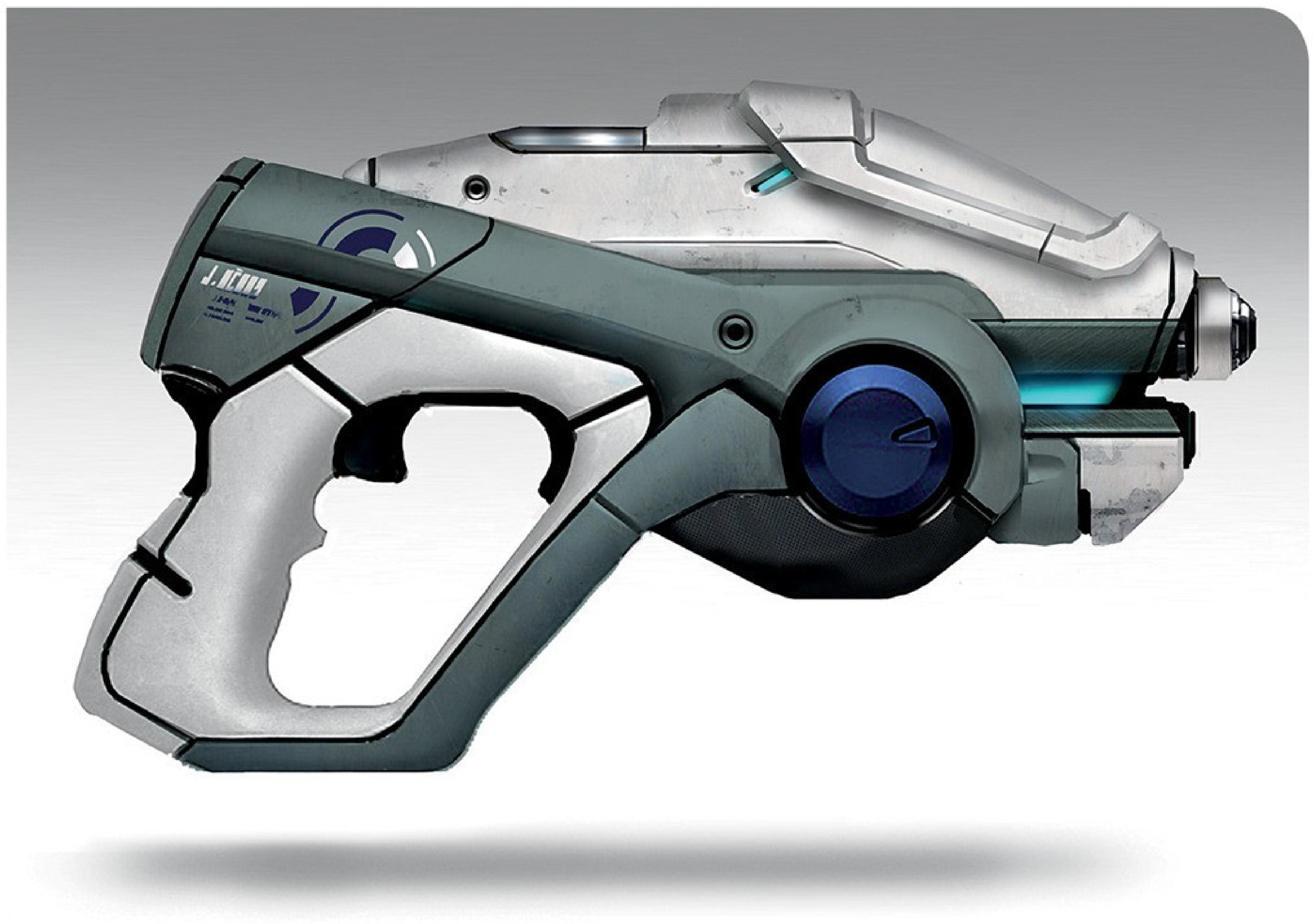



THE THERMAL CLIP.
TOP VIEW
ROUNDED RECTANGLE.

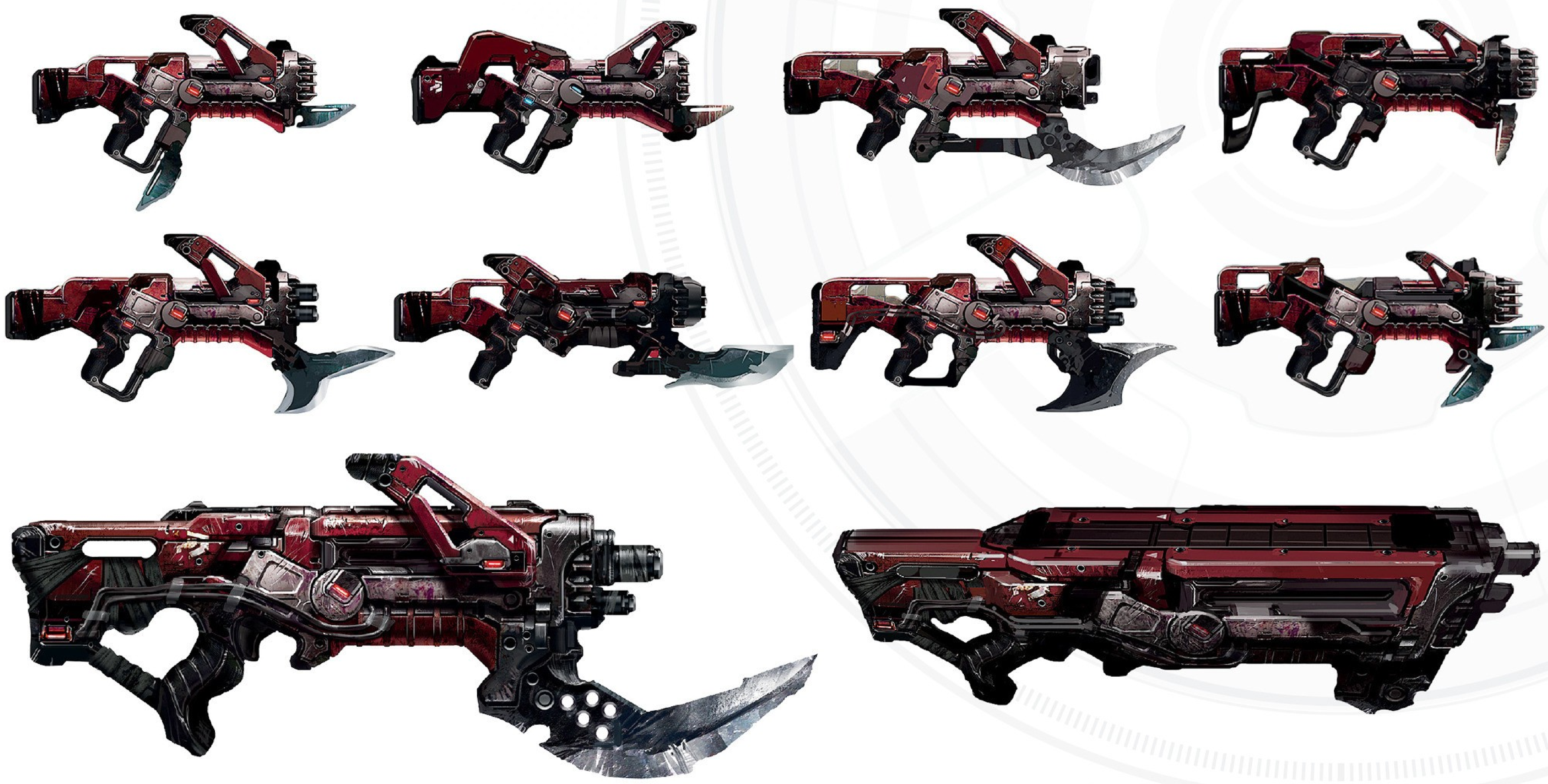
JB: The assault rifle at the bottom of the page was one of the earliest designs produced for *Andromeda*, and it was the very first asset I created on the project. These concepts, along with the animations, took into account how it would look from all angles. A heavy emphasis was put on how the weapon would look while reloading.



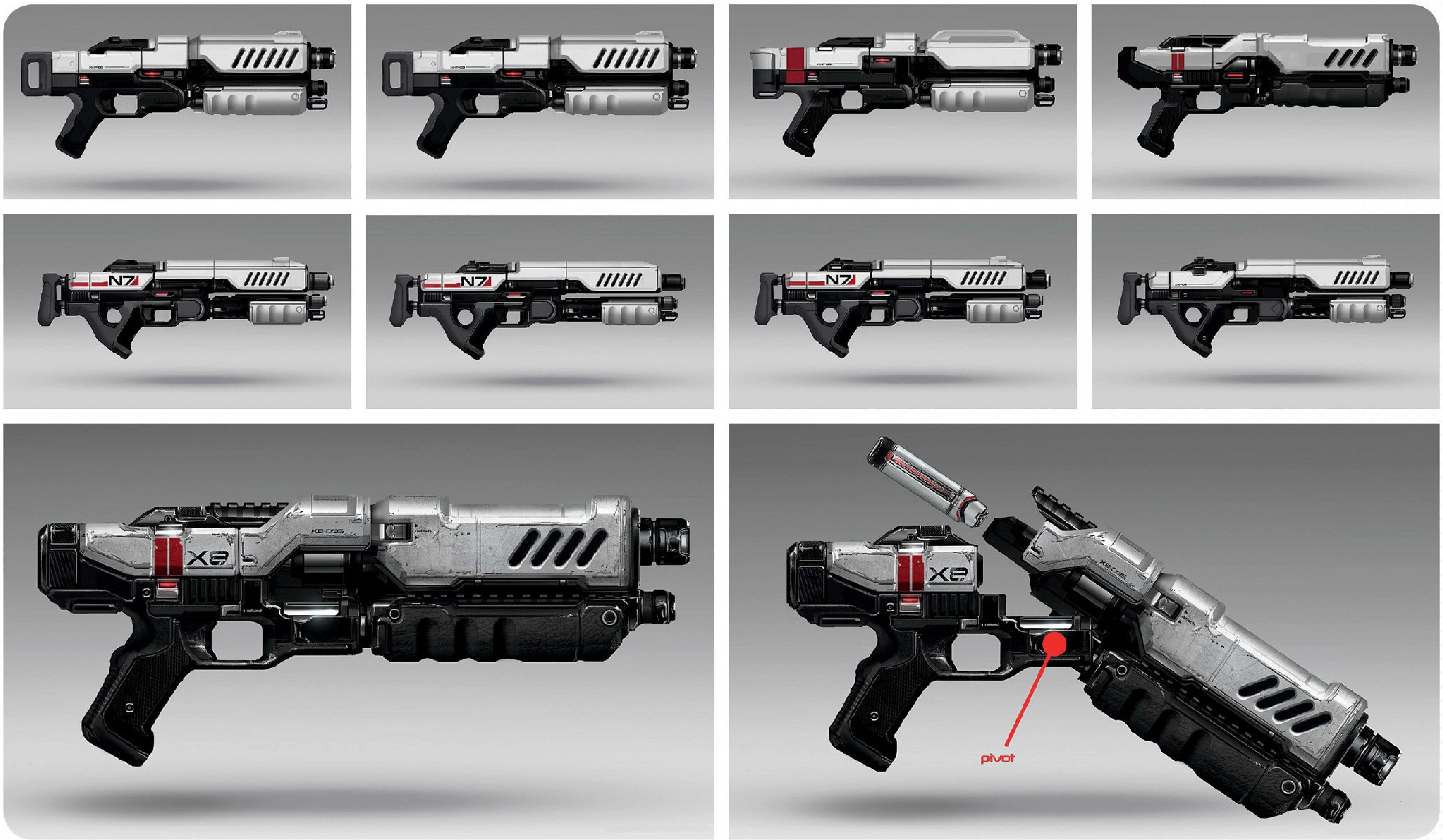




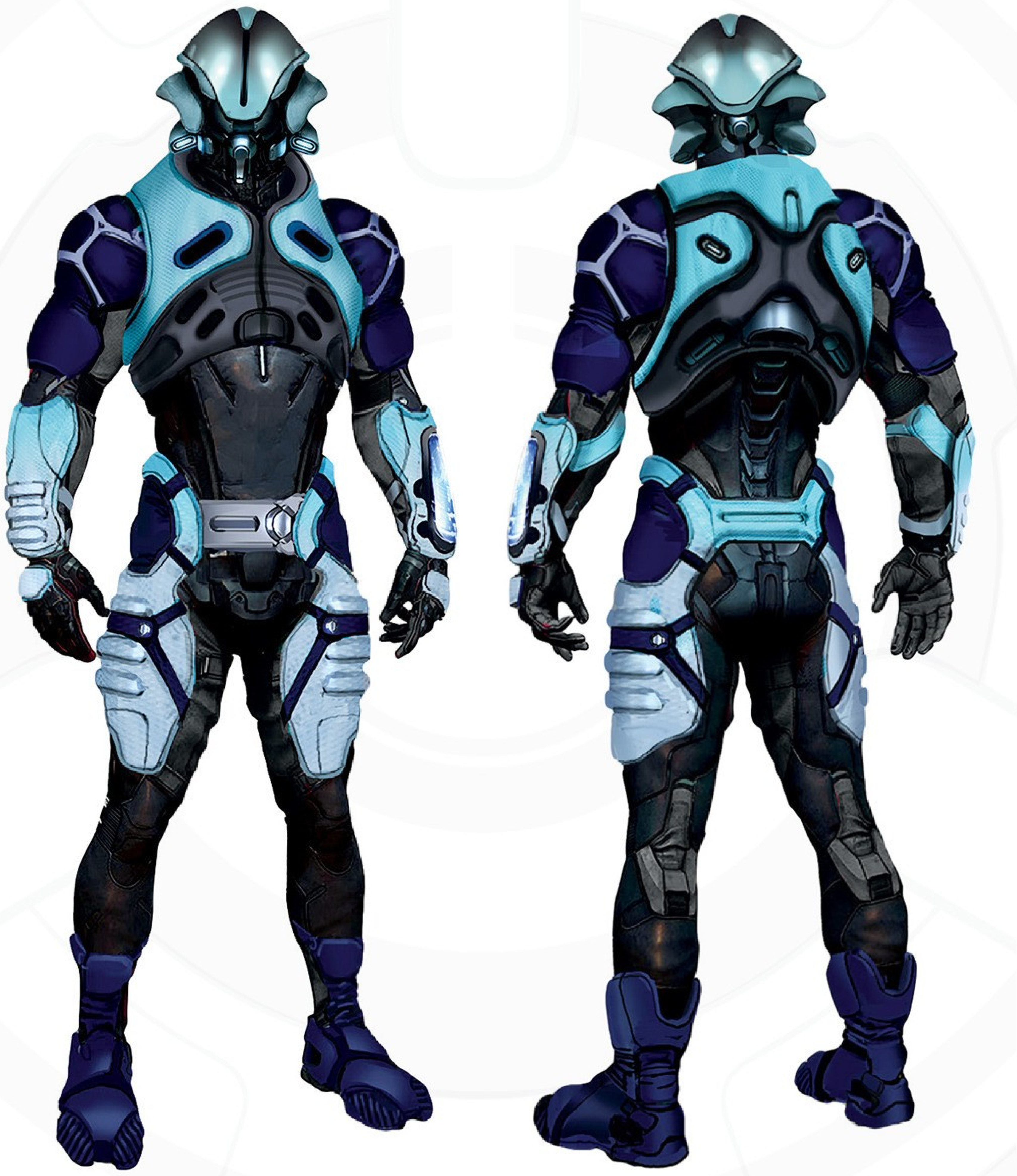
Chris King: When exploring weaponry for the game, we initially focused on what would identify the three different factions. What technologies made sense for the creatures using them, what themes would make them stand out from one another, and what elements would elicit the player's curiosity and entice them to try new weapons? The Milky Way galaxy weapons are more grounded and familiar to players and share similarities with modern-day weaponry. Kett weapons are designed to feel much more mysterious, exotic, and oftentimes organic in construction. Whereas Milky Way weapons should feel familiar in some ways to their real-life counterparts, the kett weapons are intended to make players curious about their function. Outlaw weaponry tends to be less sophisticated and elegant than that of the other factions, but no less potent. In the same way the outlaw faction is made up of a hodgepodge of various aliens and races, outlaw weaponry also features lots of different elements and components that have been combined or repurposed for their functionality.

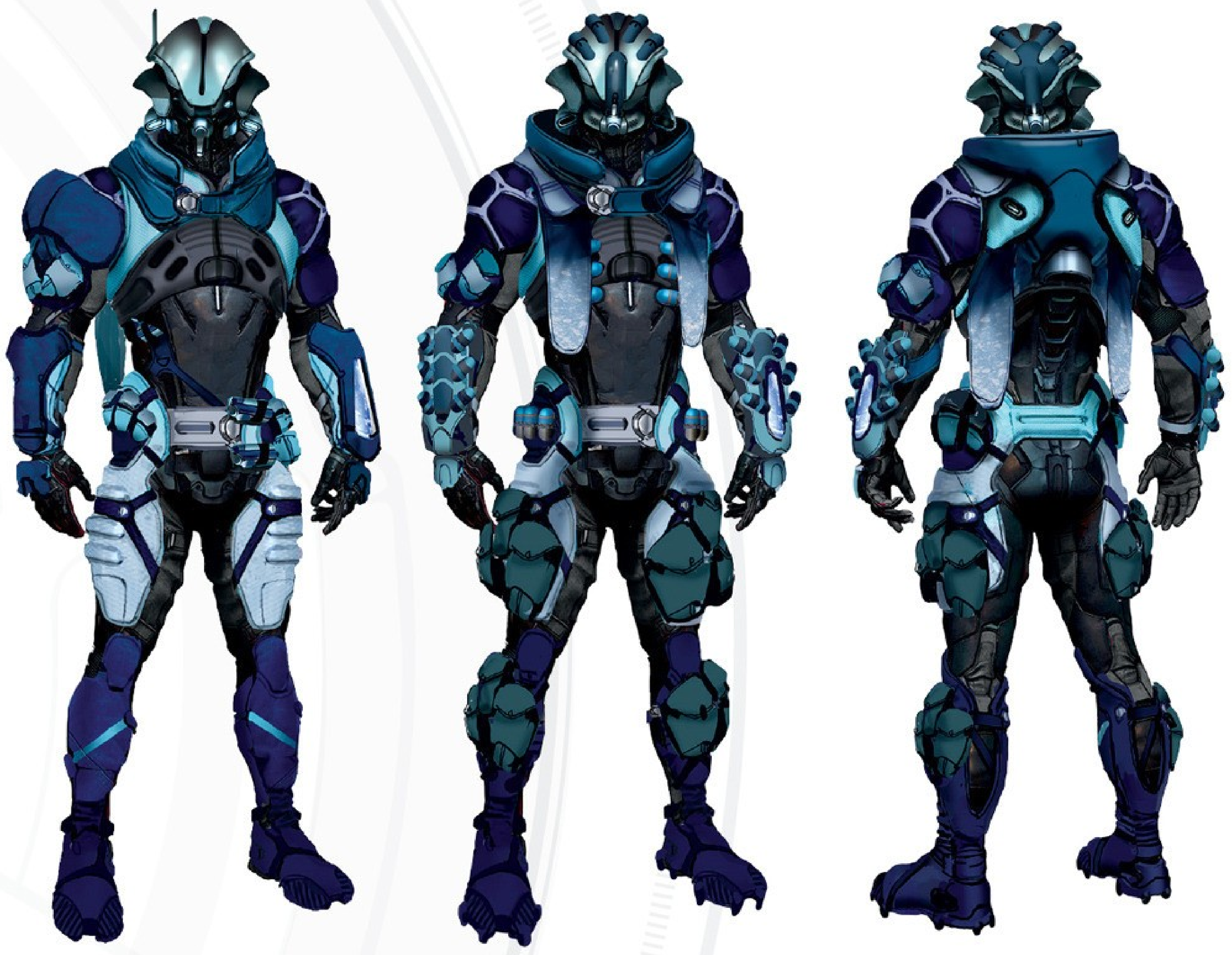


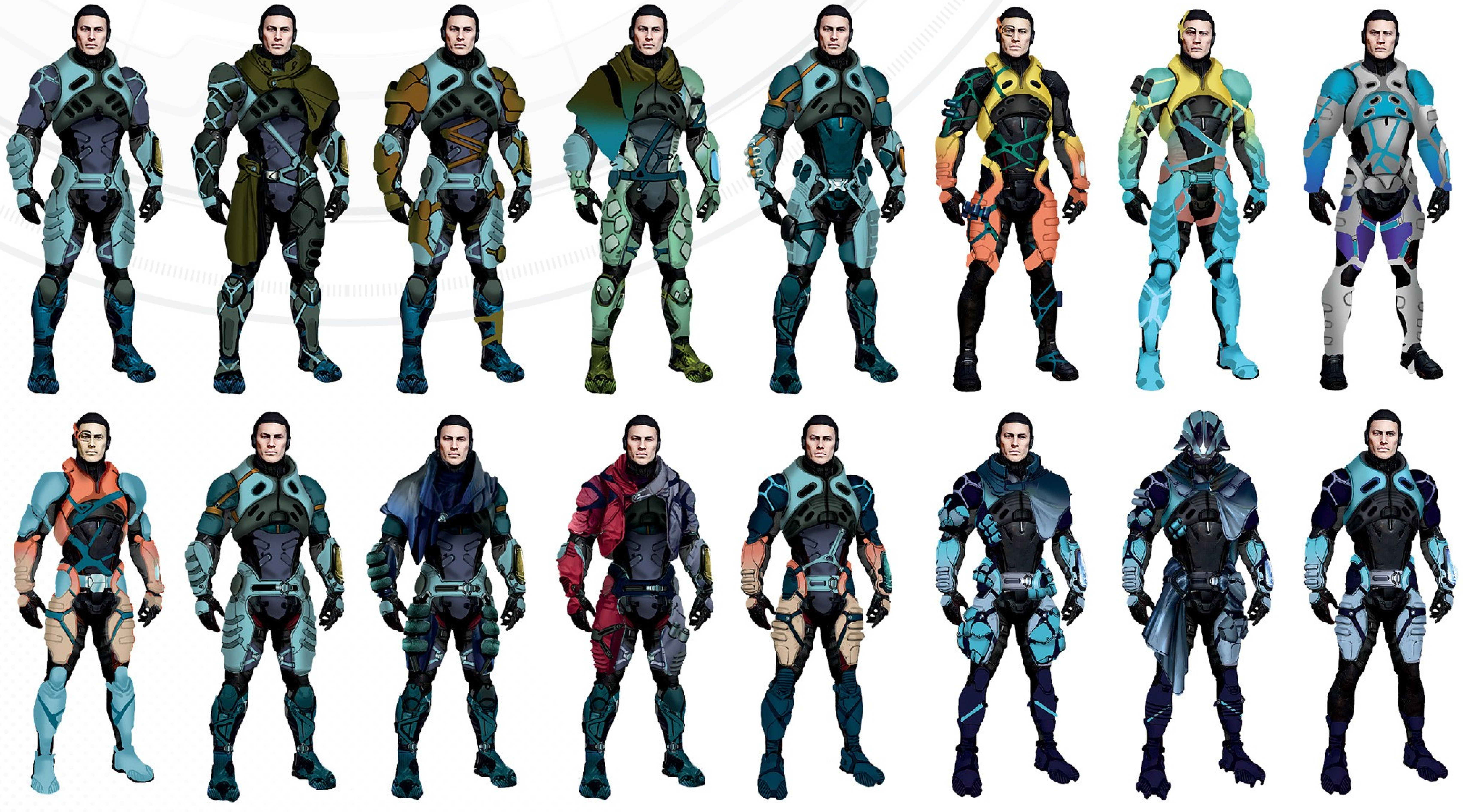
JB: The krogan shotgun was another one of the early weapon concepts, and the bayonet blade in front went through a bunch of changes. One of the considerations with all *Mass Effect* weapons is that they have to be able to collapse into easily carried compact forms, so another challenge with this weapon was its size. It was designed as a krogan's shotgun, but we had to keep in mind that a human might also use it.



JB: Cora's shotgun might be my favorite weapon in the game. I really like the simple, classic lines. It looks futuristic, and has easily readable old-school *Mass Effect* lines. The concept was very clean and believable, and it is definitely a weapon of which I'd love to have a replica.

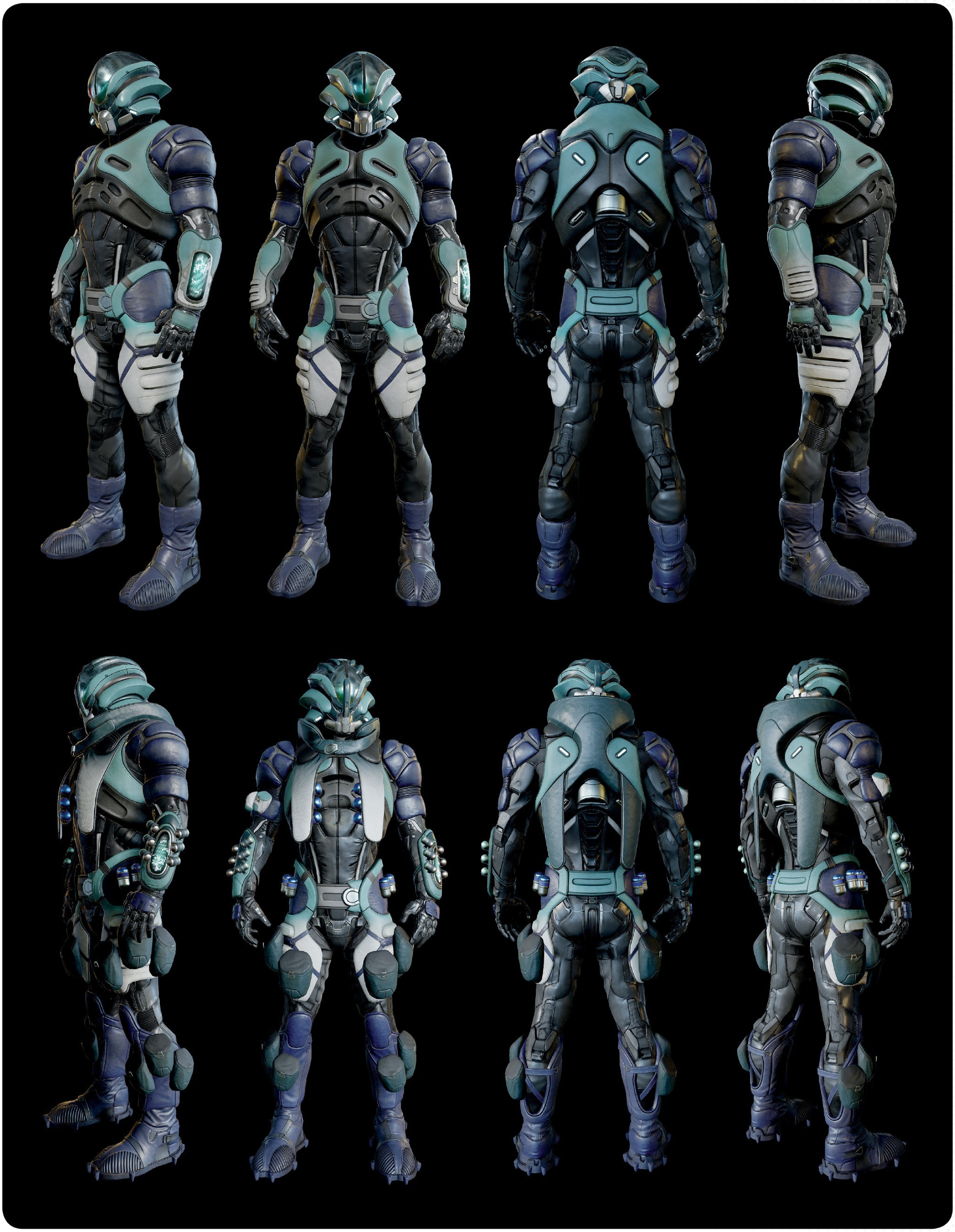


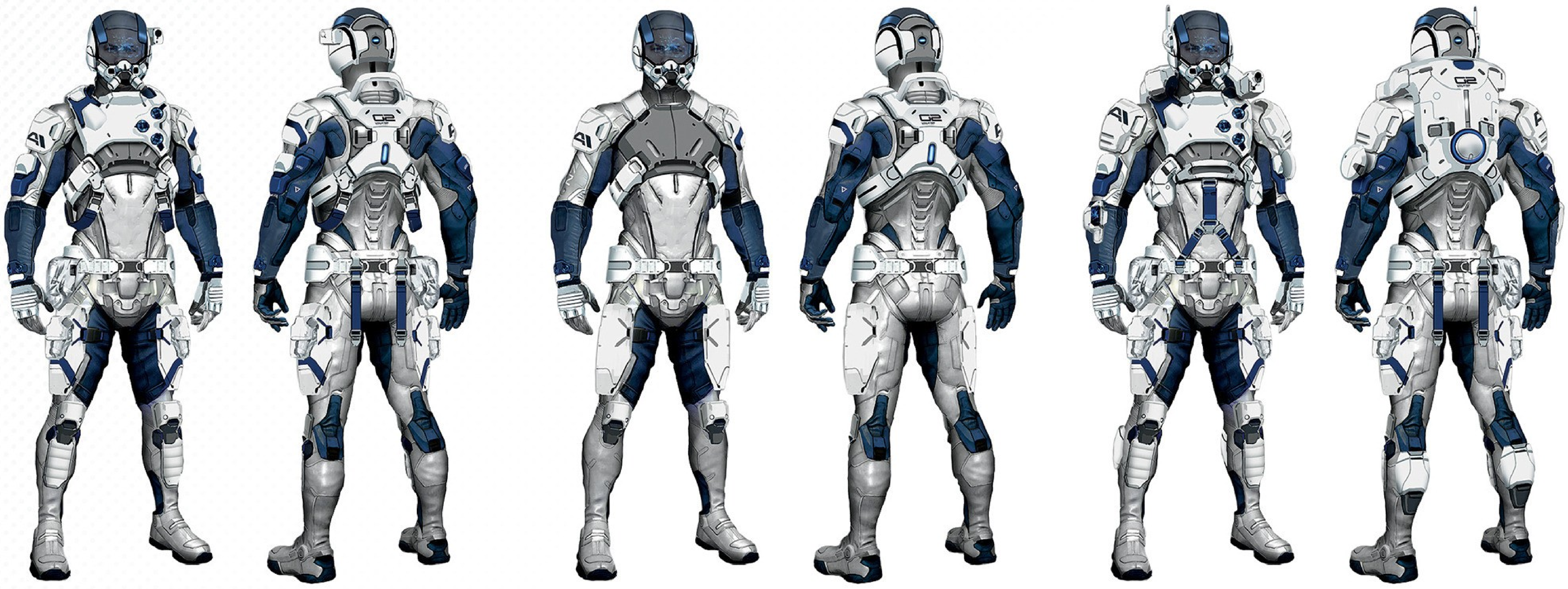


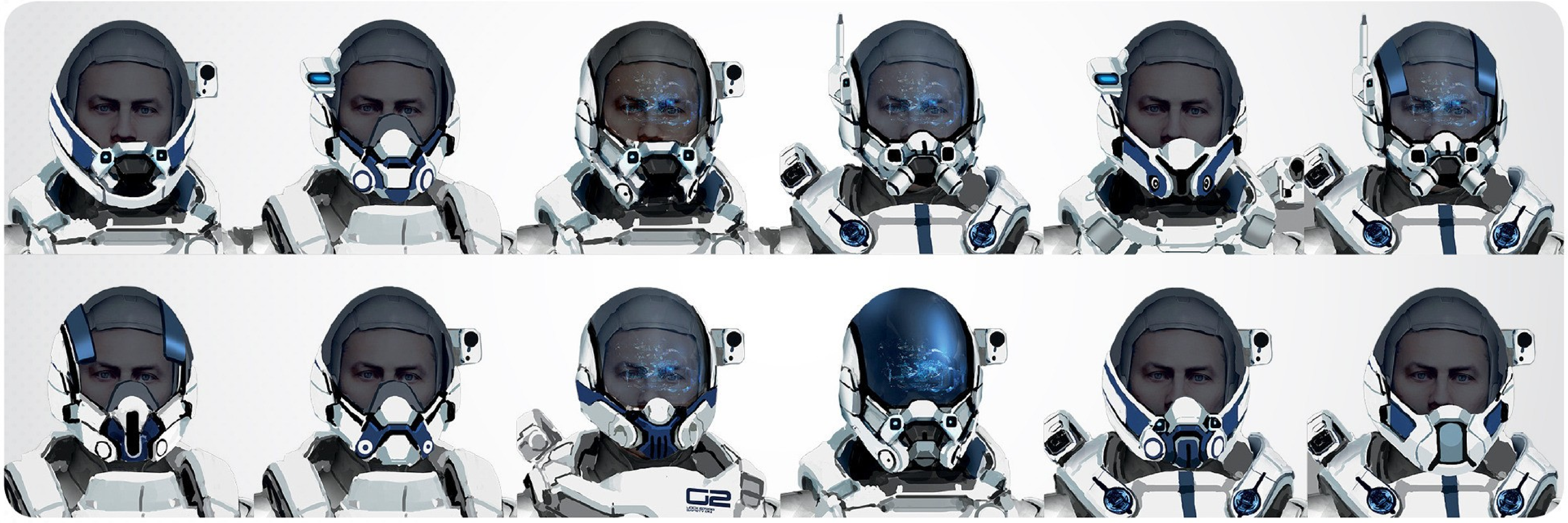


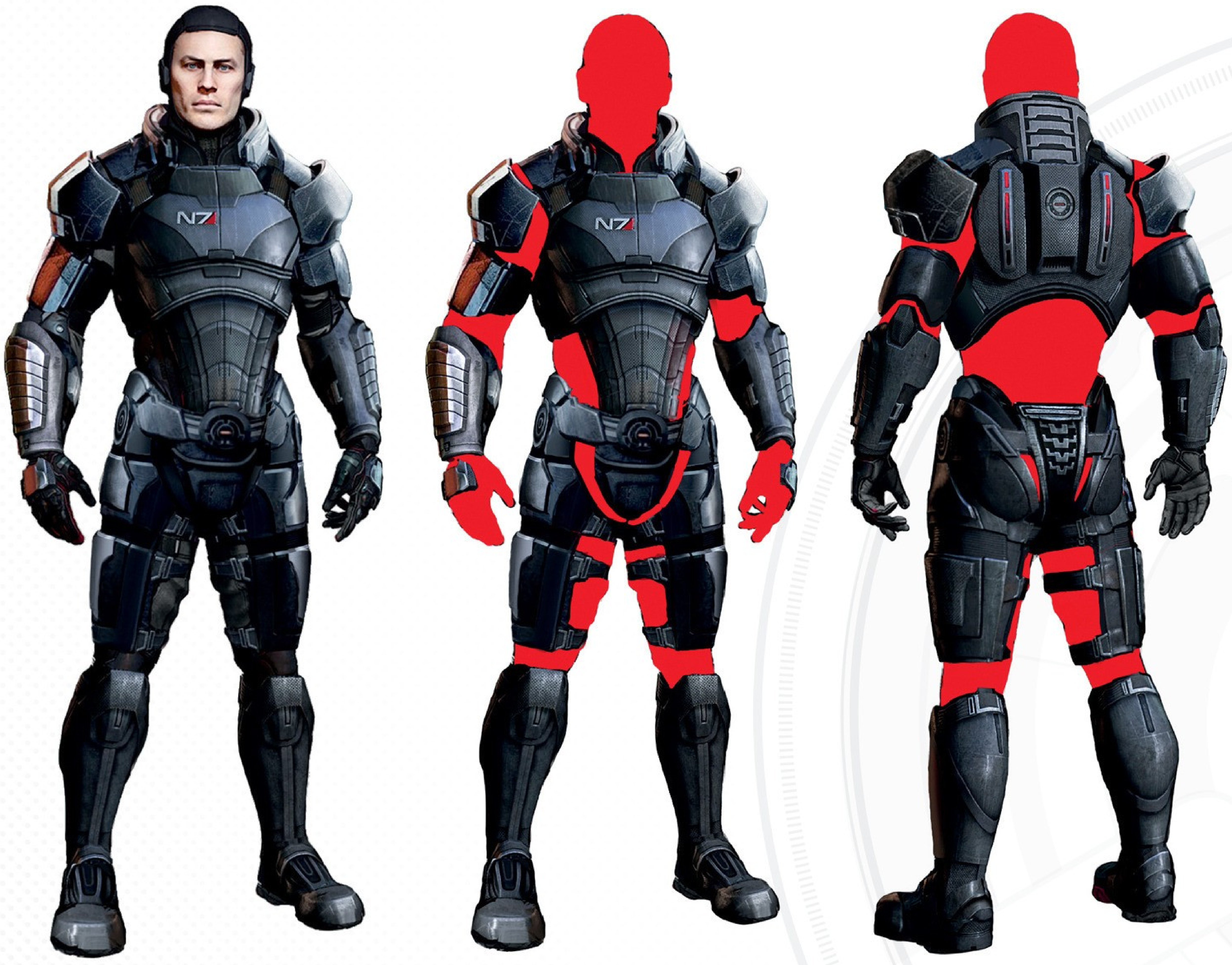
ARMOR

JB: The Pathfinder angara theme armor was—technically speaking—one of the hardest models to solve. Managing functionality was a huge challenge since you can swap out pieces from one set of armor with another set. Not only did I have to maintain restraints from the human underarmor, but also I had to make sure they fit with the other parts. Still, I was quite pleased with the end result. It has clean, flowing lines, and an interesting color palette.

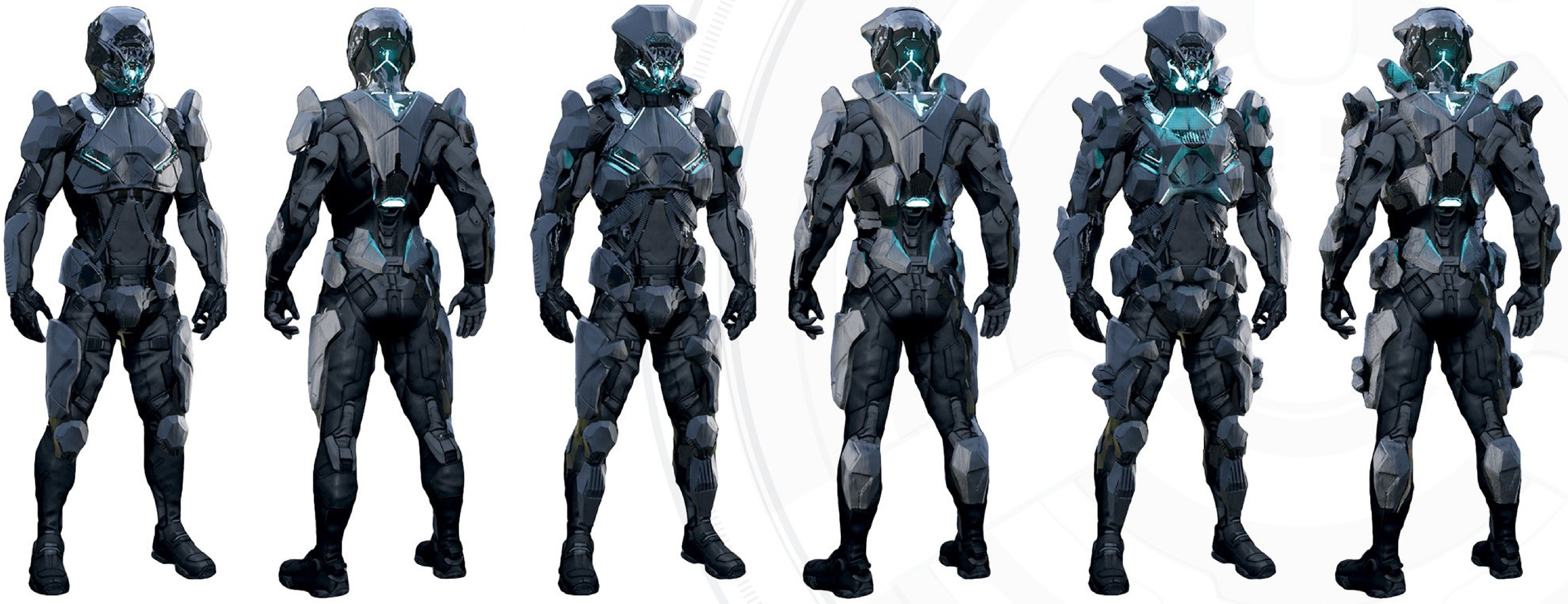


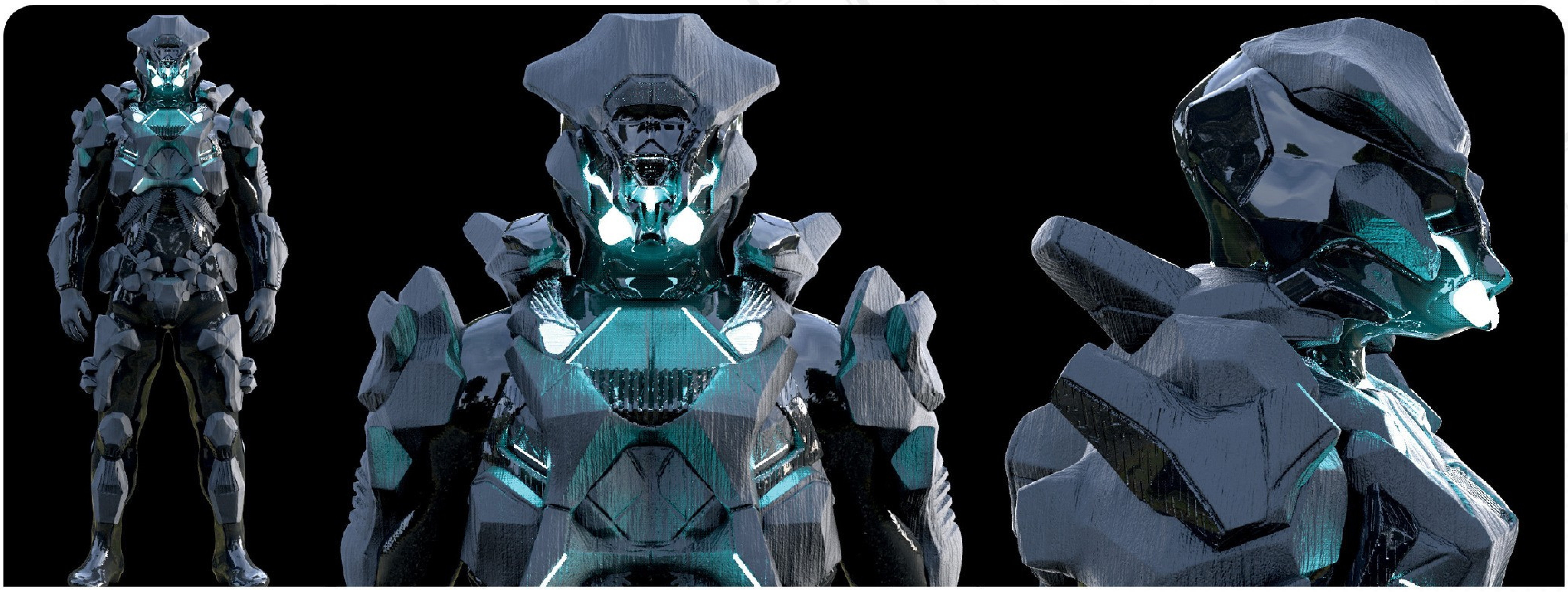


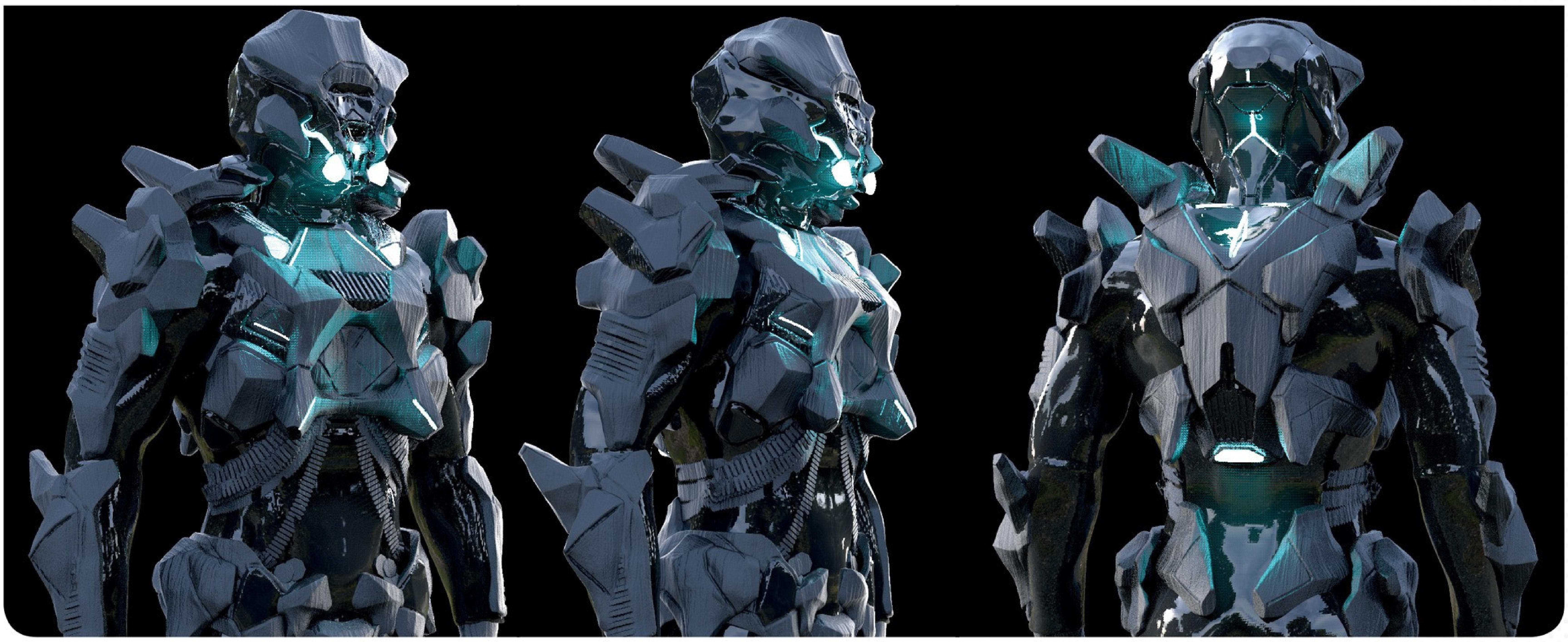




HL: Above is the main armor of the Andromeda Initiative. The approach to this armor was for it to look slicker and cleaner than the Pathfinder's. Below is the N7 armor. We wanted to bring back some iconic elements from the trilogy, so we re-created the classic N7 armor and made some tweaks to accommodate the underarmor.

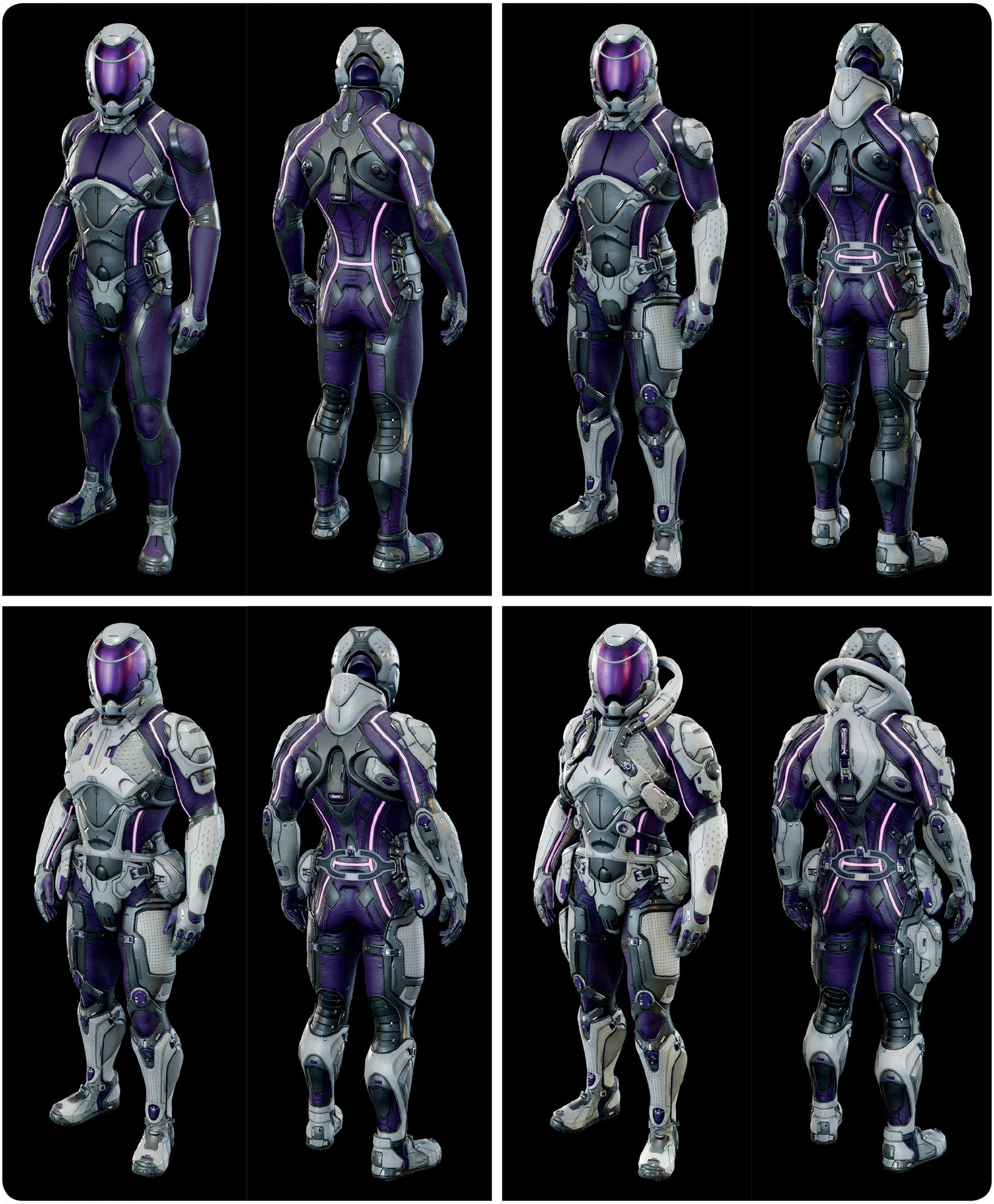




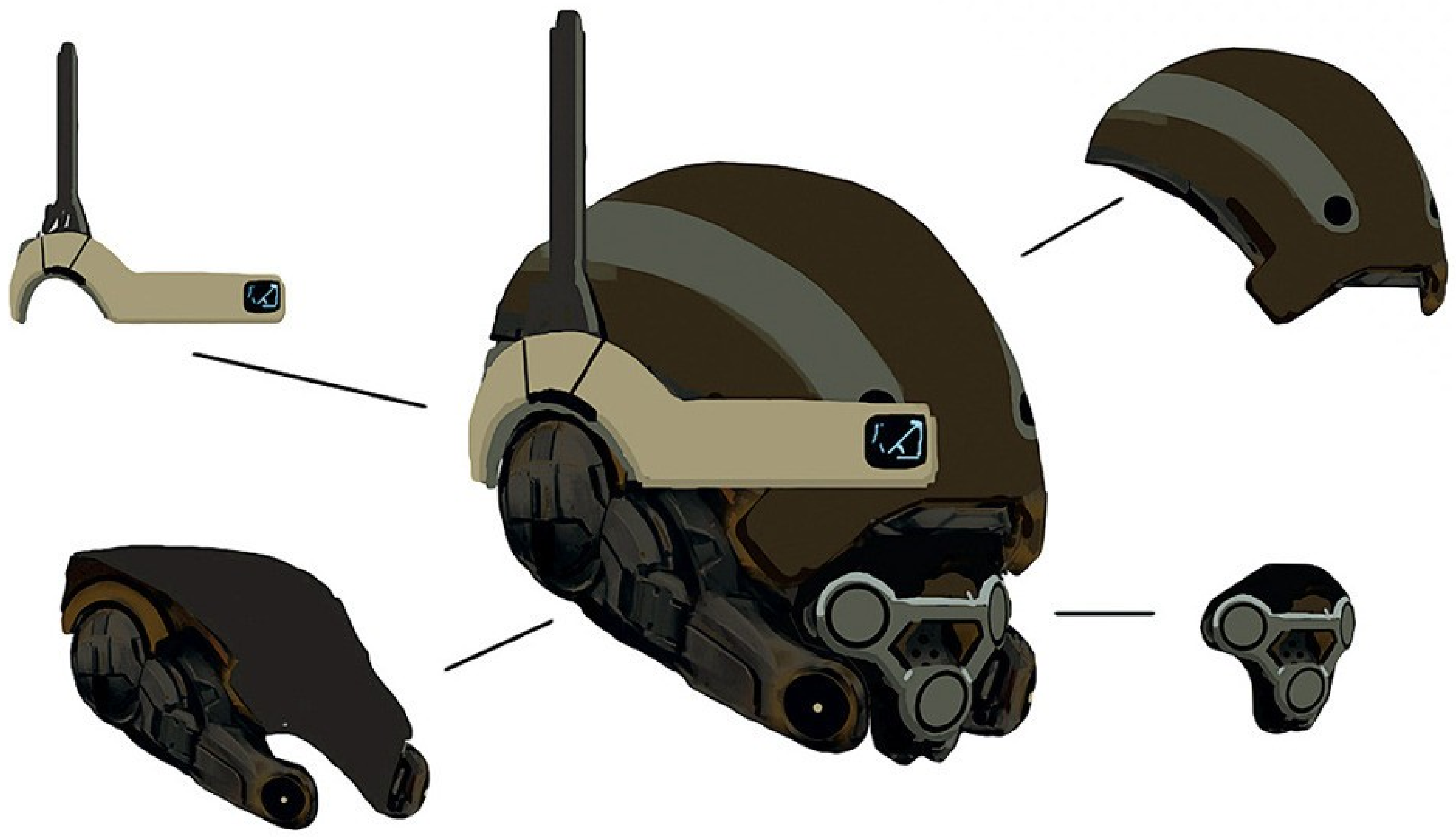


HL: This is armor based on the Remnant technology. It was a bit tricky to make sure the Remnant style worked well on top of the Milky Way underarmor.

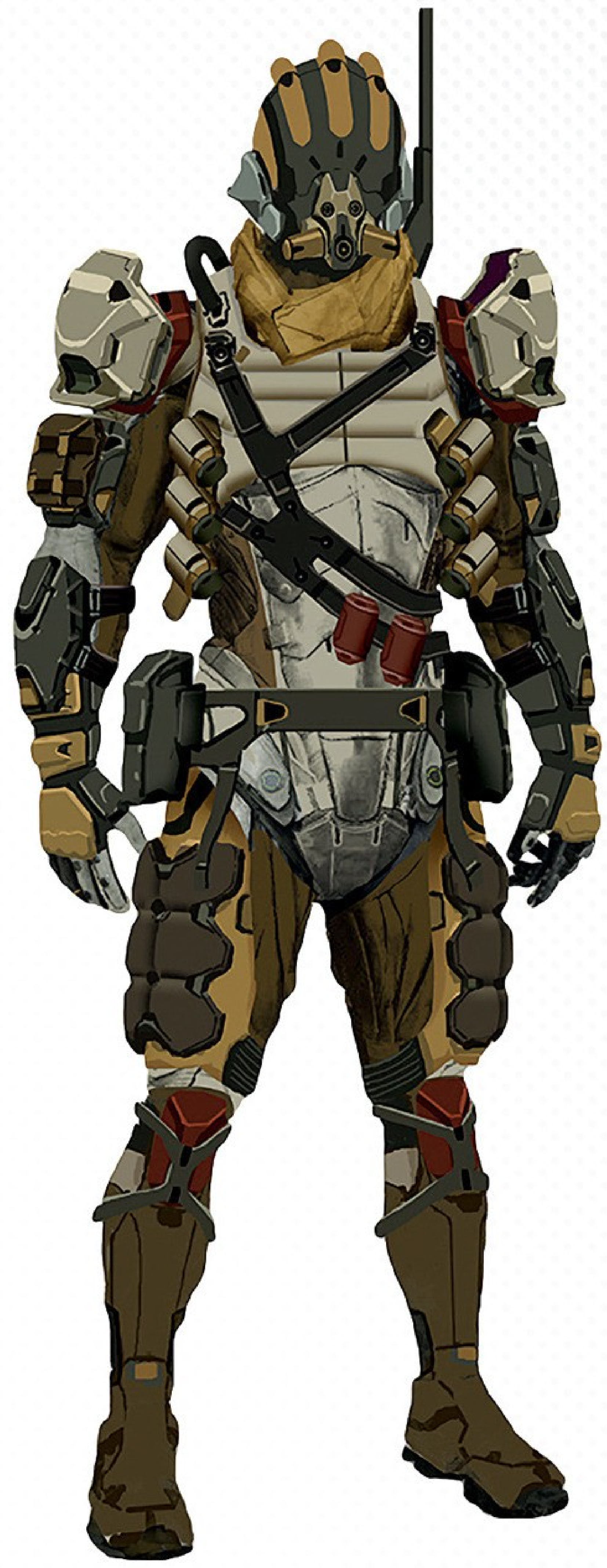
BS: In keeping with the angular, chiseled theme of the Remnant palette, we knew that the Remnant armor set would be one of the more unique armors. With a limited color palette to work with, we played around with different materials and emissive lights to add shape, variety, and interest.

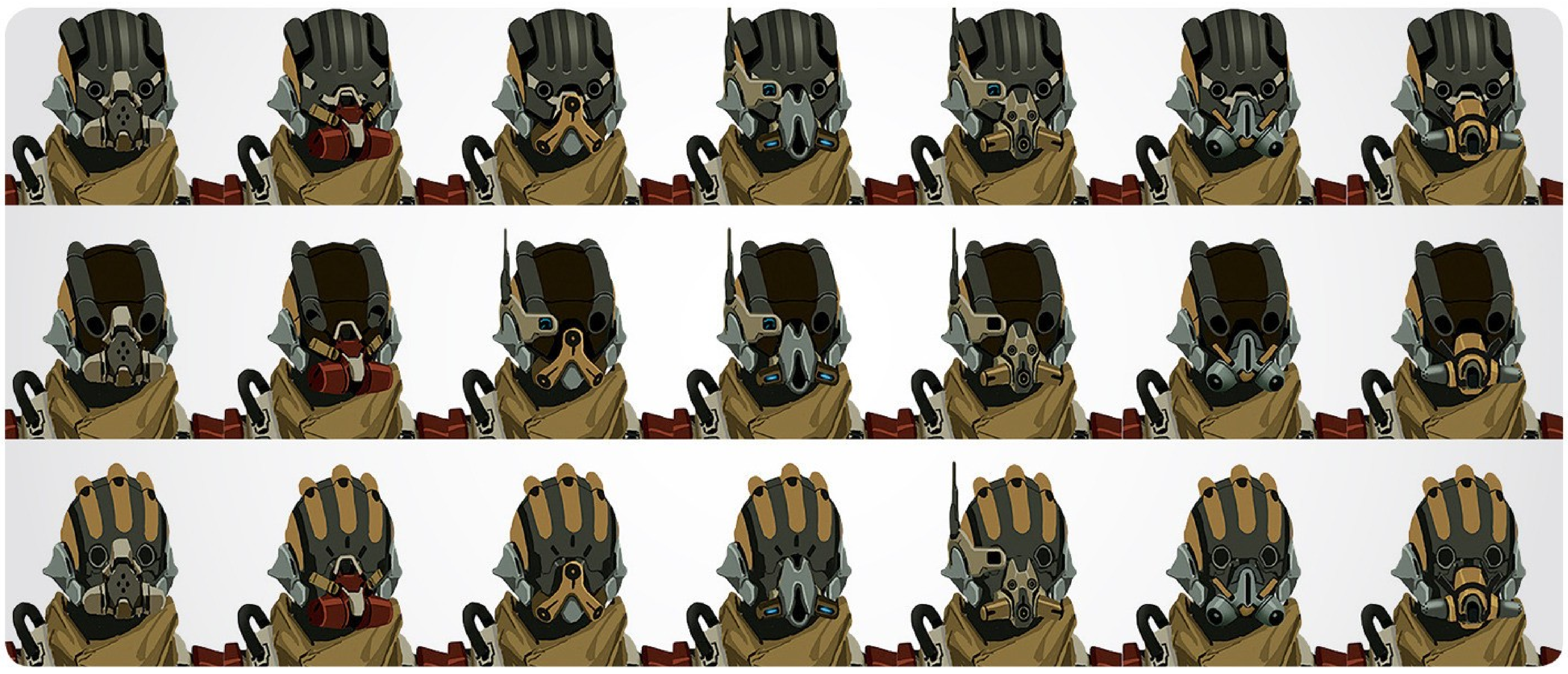


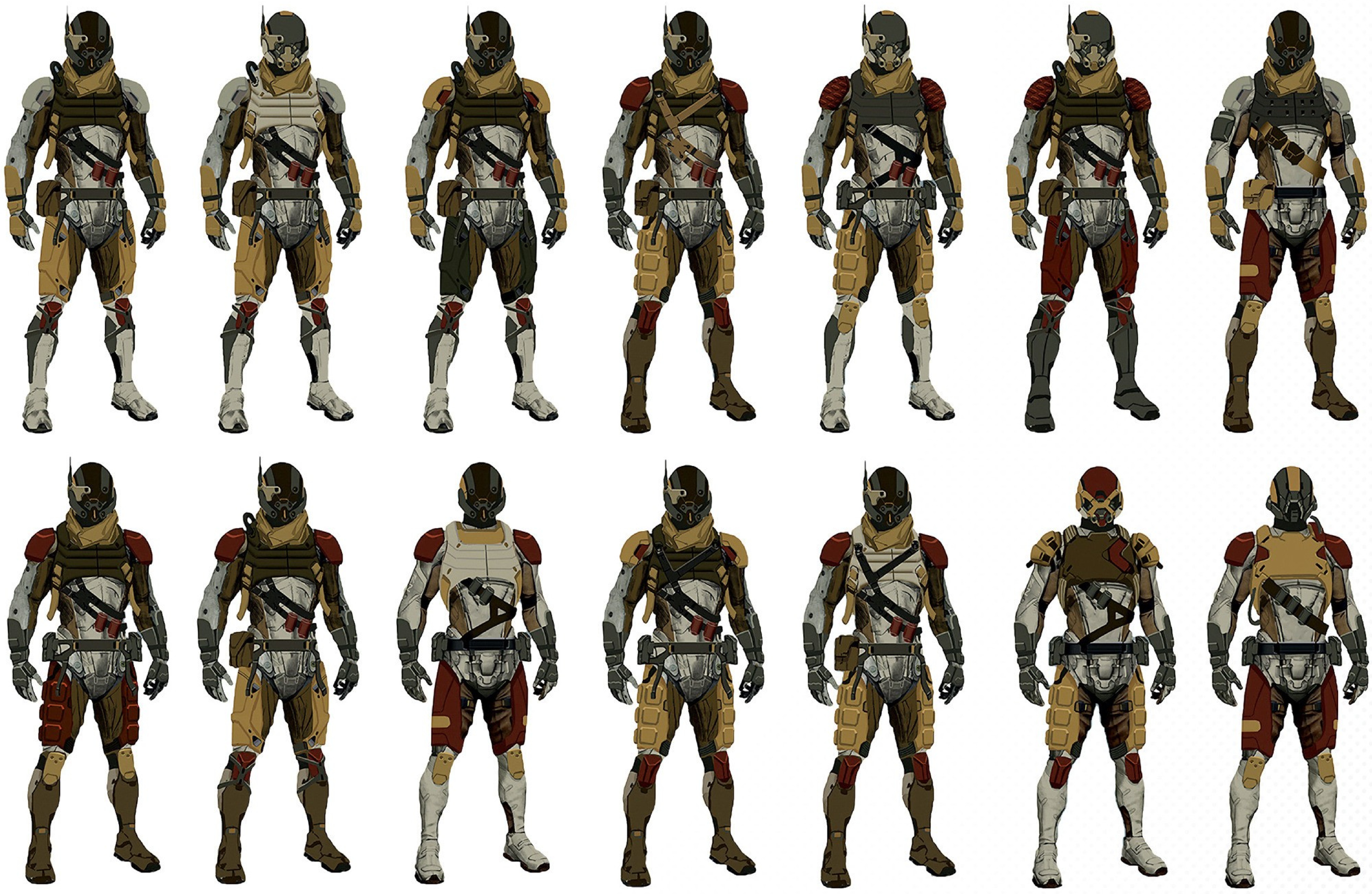
CC: The Heleus armor is *Andromeda*'s end game armor set. We wanted to harken back to the eighties vibe, while offering something fun and new—hence the pulsing emissive lines. I wasn't attracted to that aesthetic and shied away from building it in 3D, but Brian did a great job revamping the design for the new concept. We also pushed to include special animated iridescent glow effects from the technical art side. All in all, we ended up with a very nice suit.

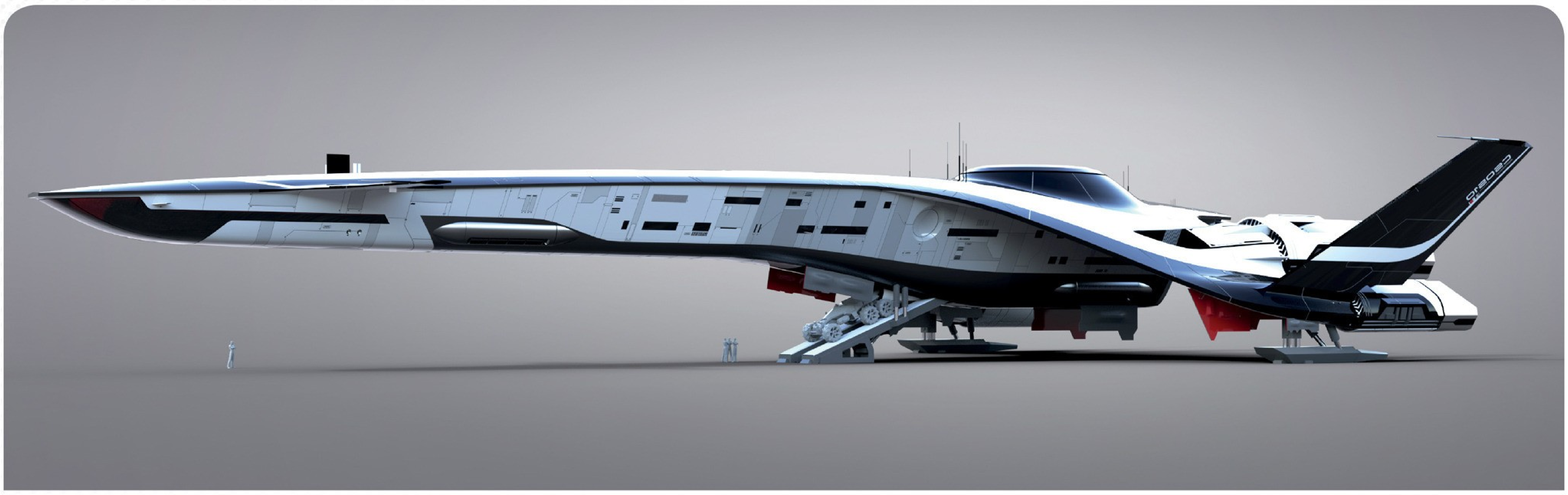


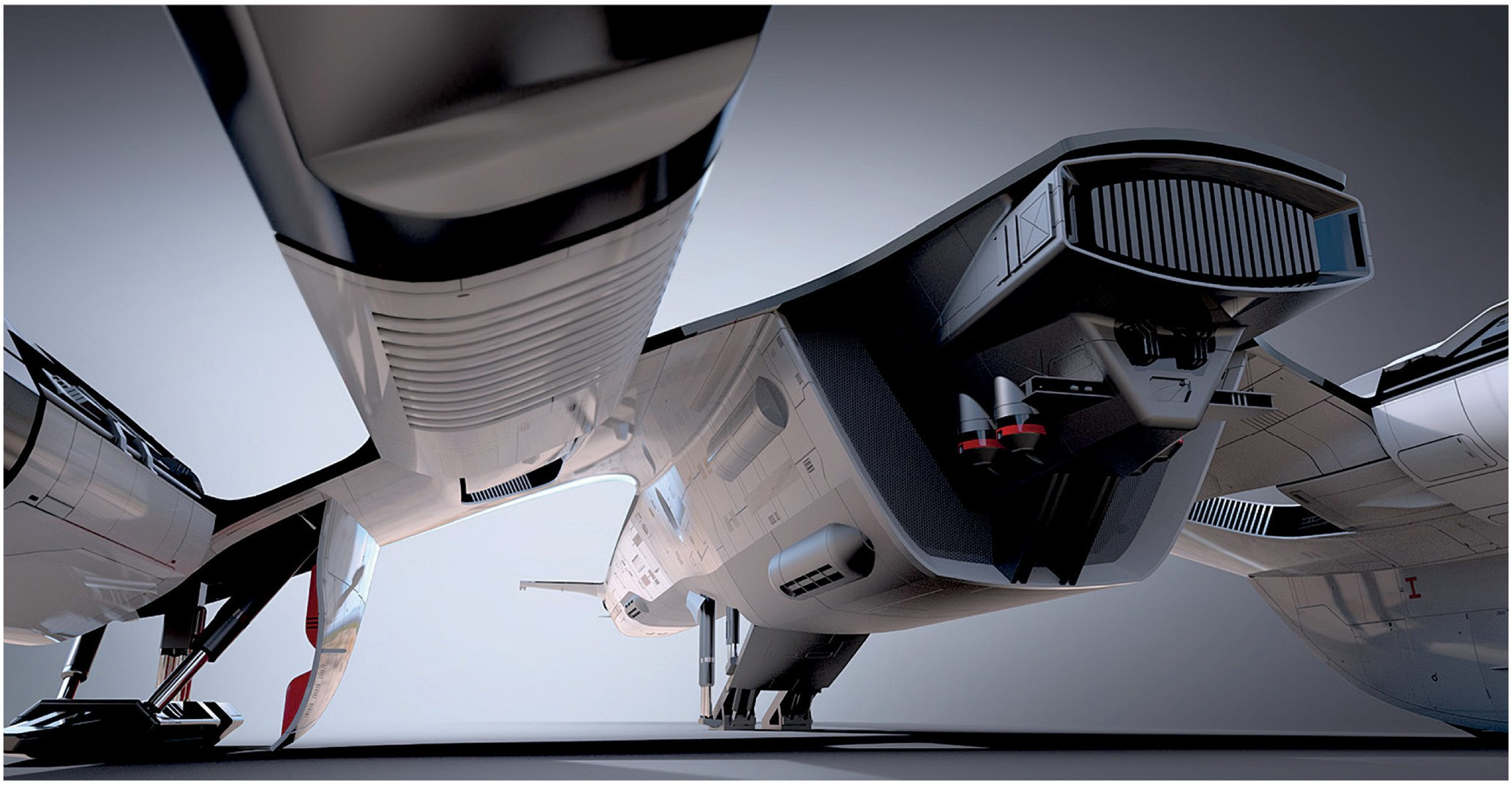
HL: These armor sets are mainly worn by enemies. Like the hero armor, it was designed to accommodate interchangeable pieces, which also helped to cut down on build time.

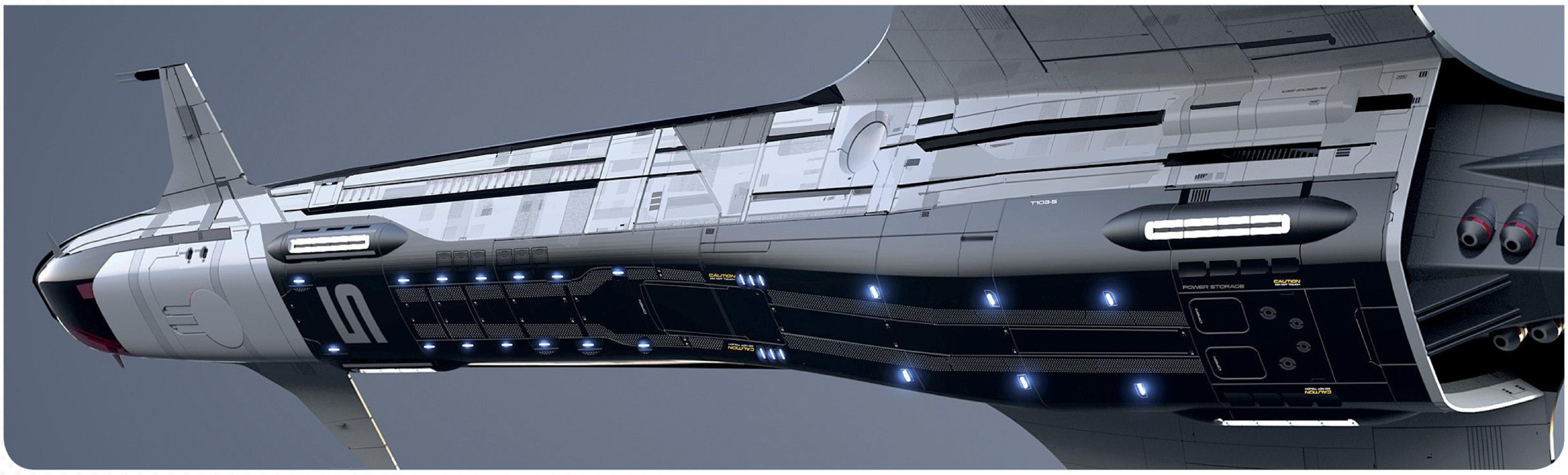








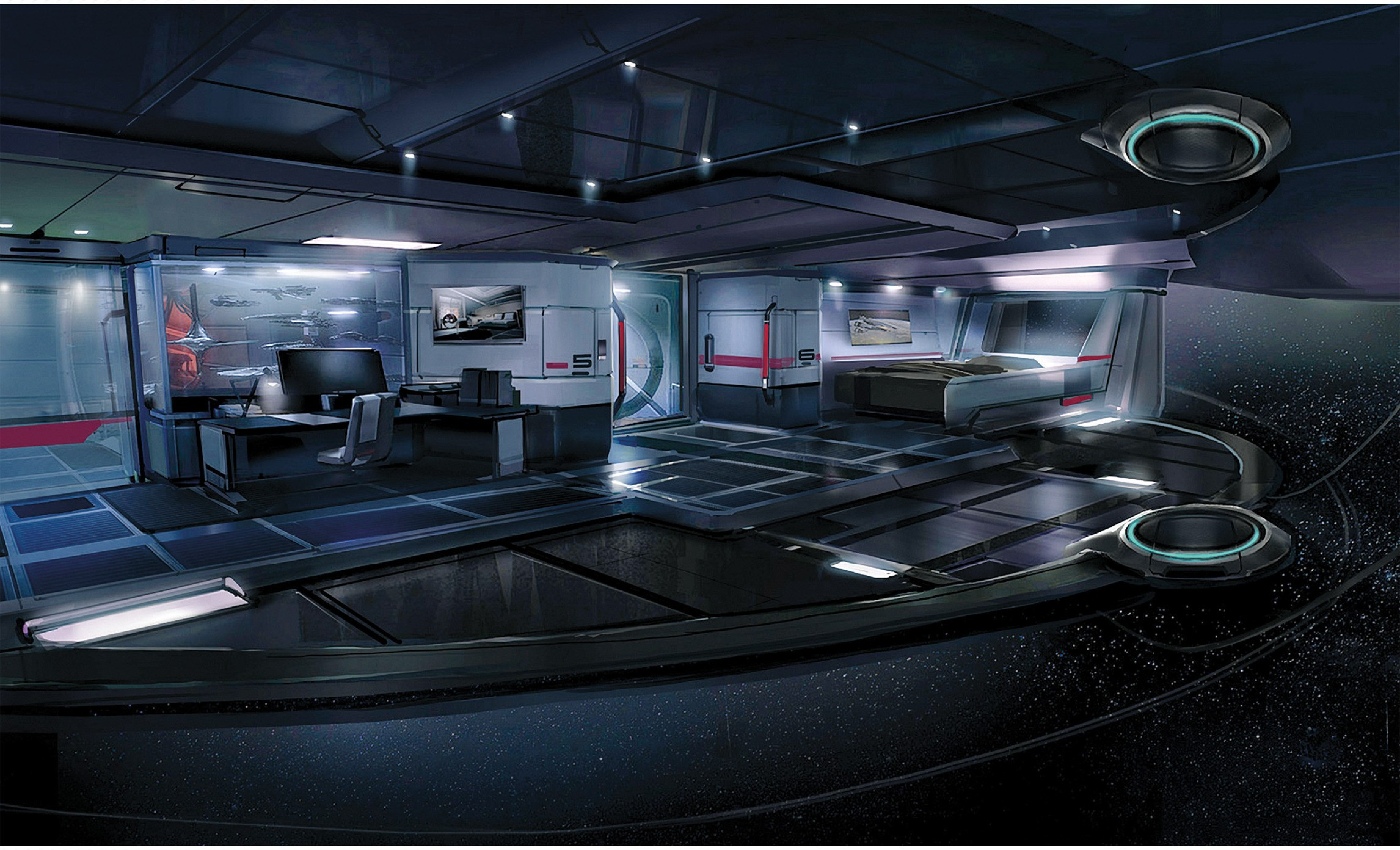


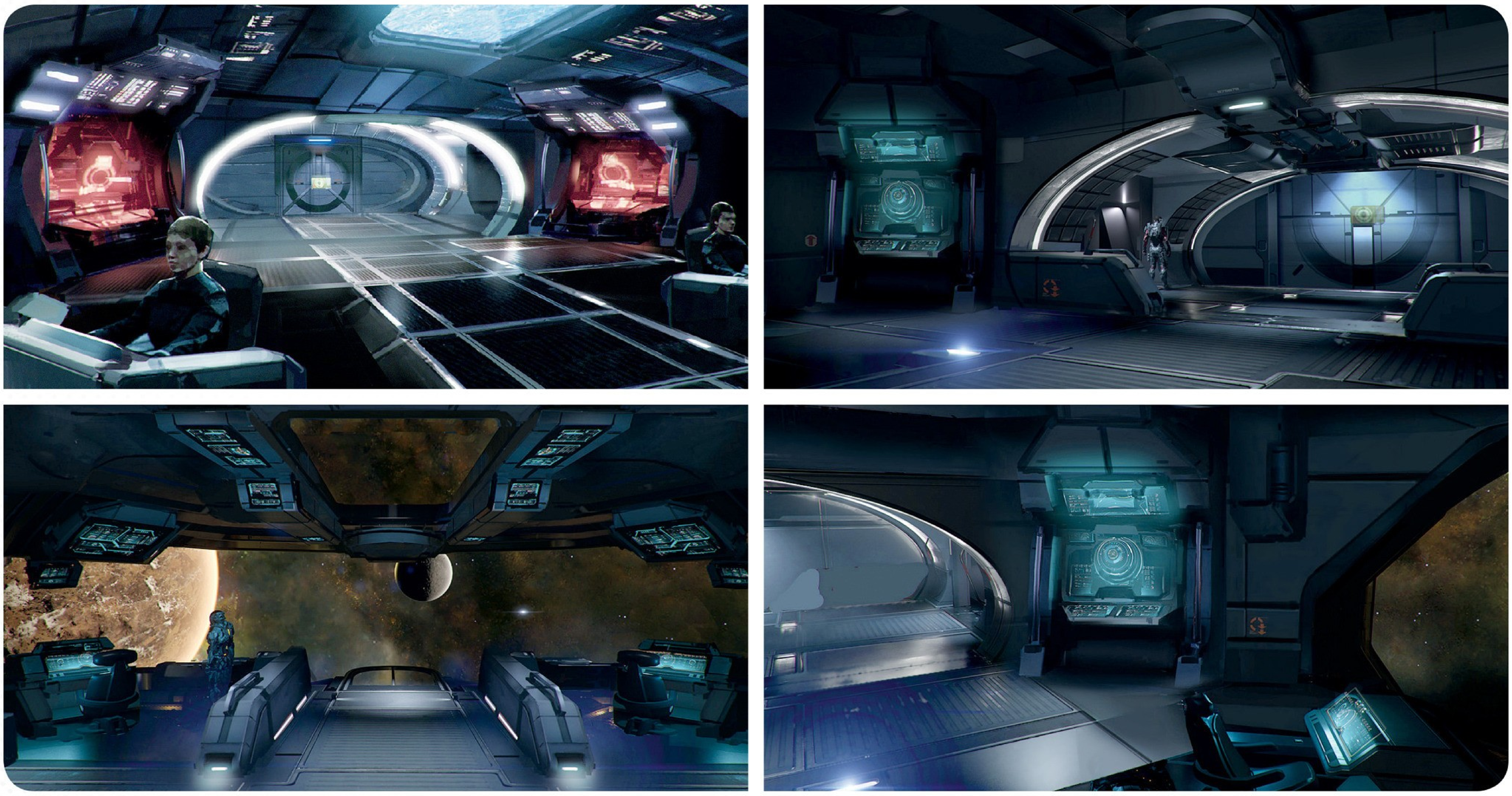


THE TEMPEST

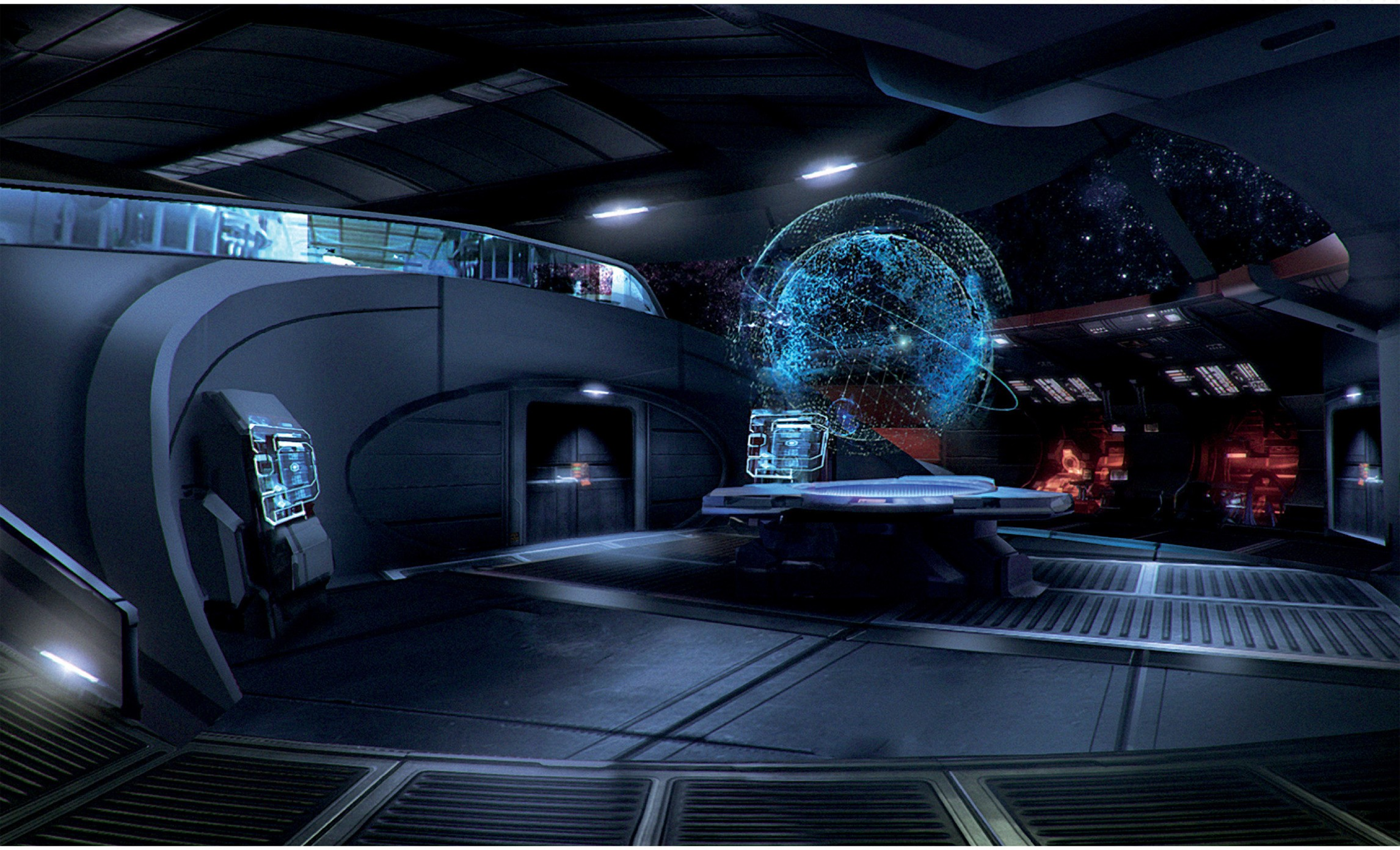
JB: The *Tempest* was uncharted territory for me. I was tasked to build the model before handing it off to one of the environment artists to texture. I'd never worked this way before, and character artists usually work very differently from environment artists. I'd normally build a high-resolution model first, and then once it was approved I'd make the in-game model. Additionally, our textures are almost always unique across the entire model, but in this case, the asset was so large that we had no choice but to use repeating, "tileable" textures. It all worked out in the end, and Ben Lewis did an awesome job of texturing it.

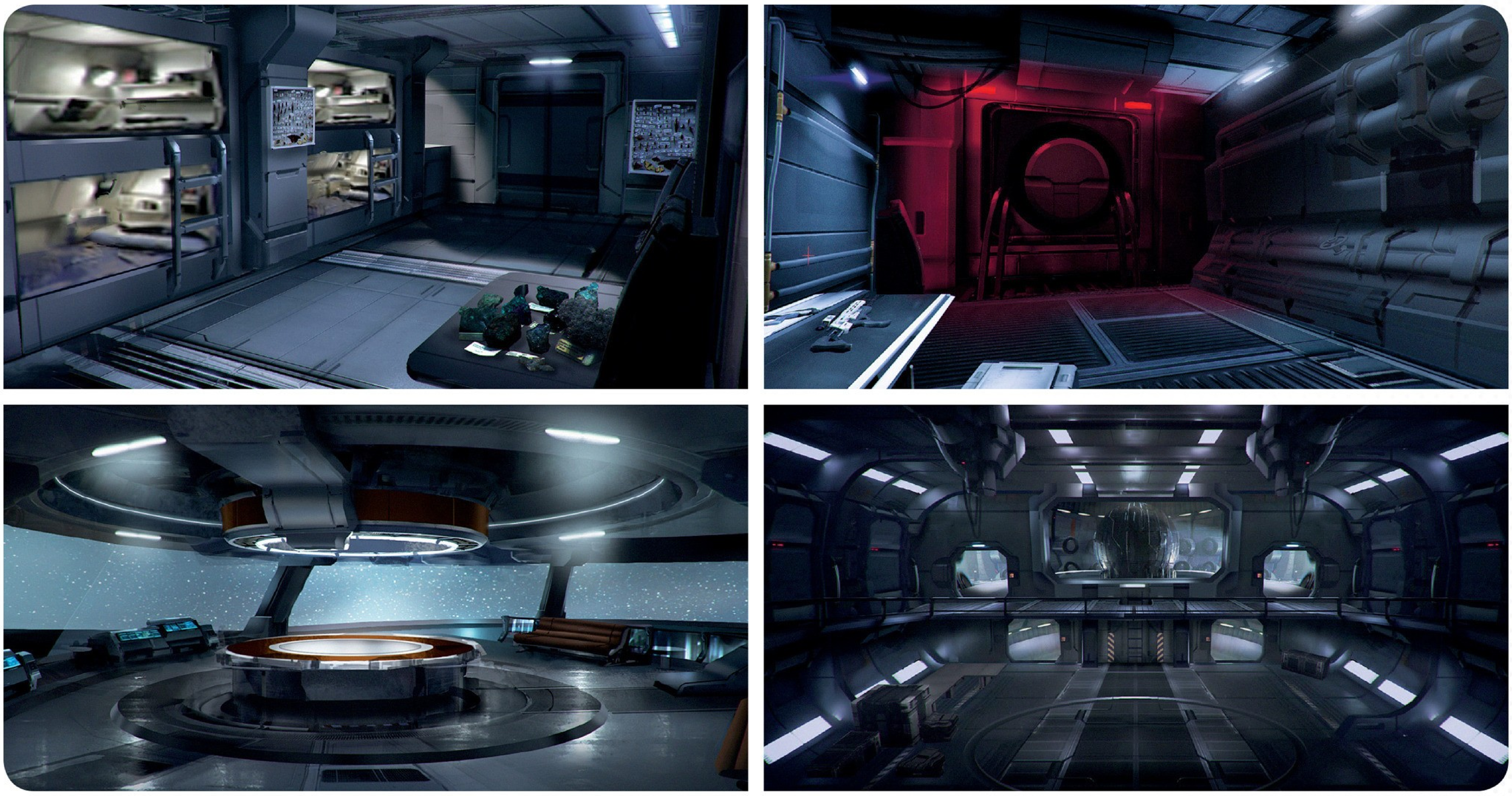
TEMPEST
TEMPEST
TEMPEST



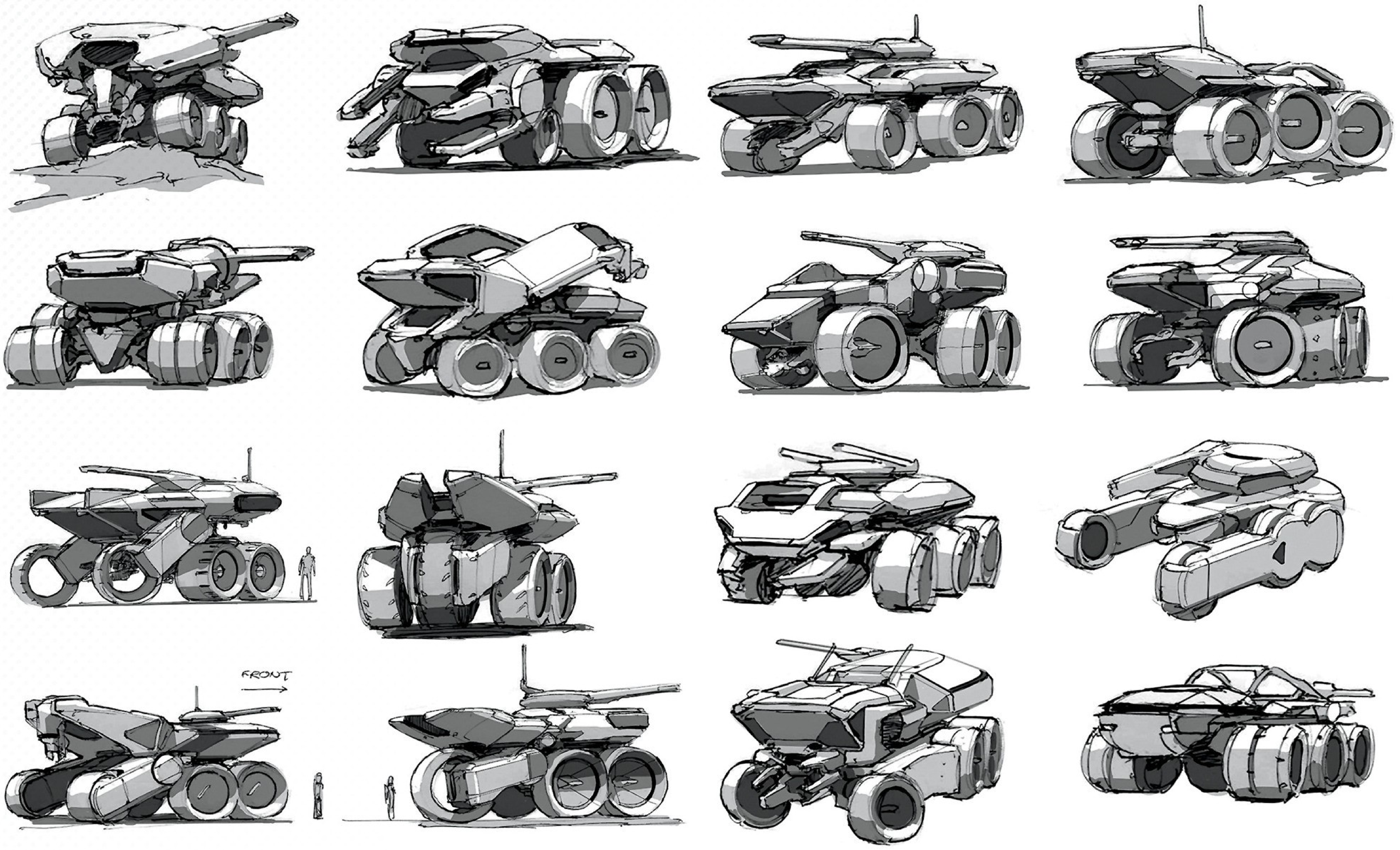


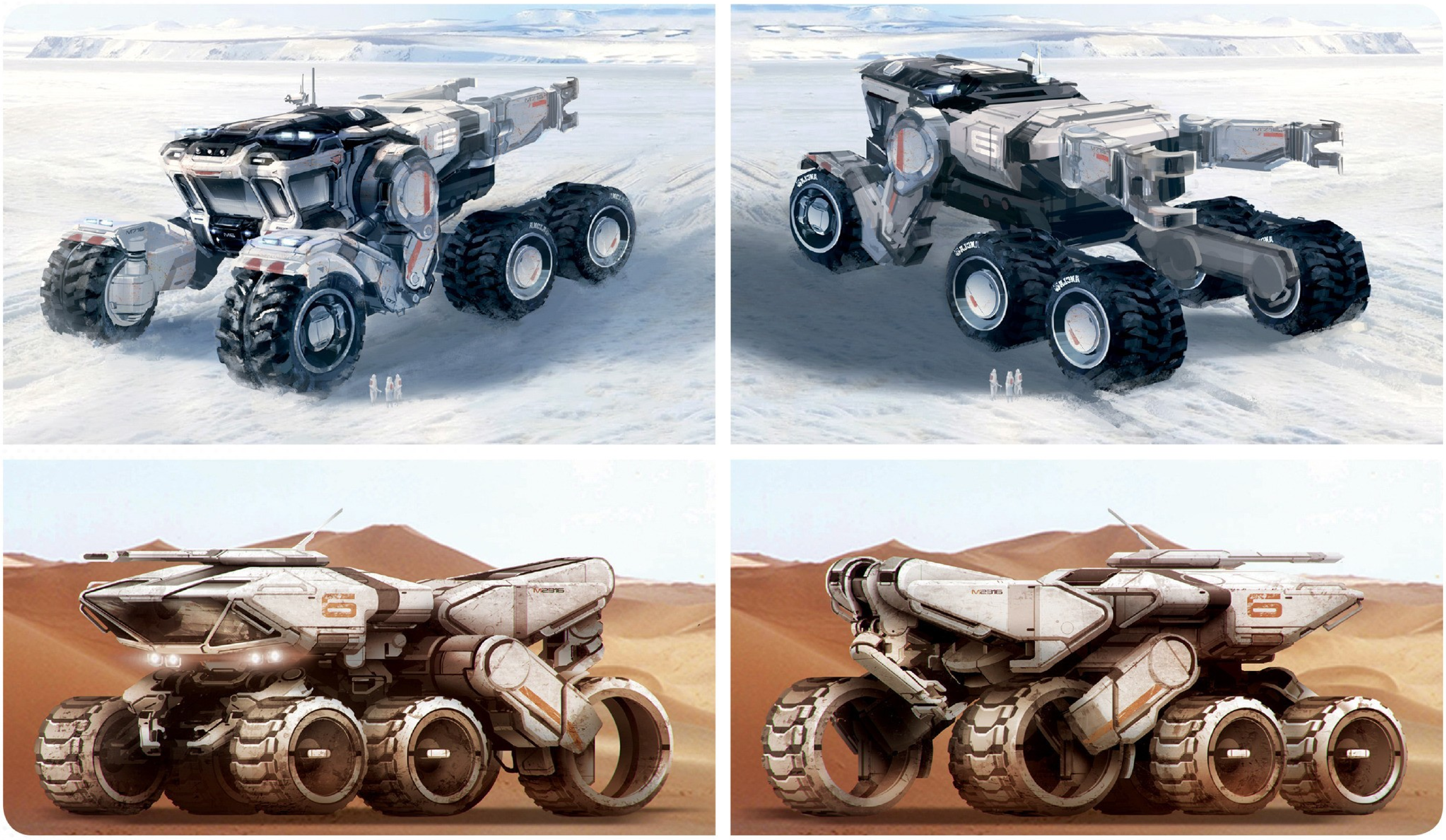
SB: It's pretty damn cool to stand in the meeting room of the *Tempest* and look out at the galaxy. That was something we pitched early on, and I am glad we could achieve the result with the scene changing depending on where you are in the galaxy.



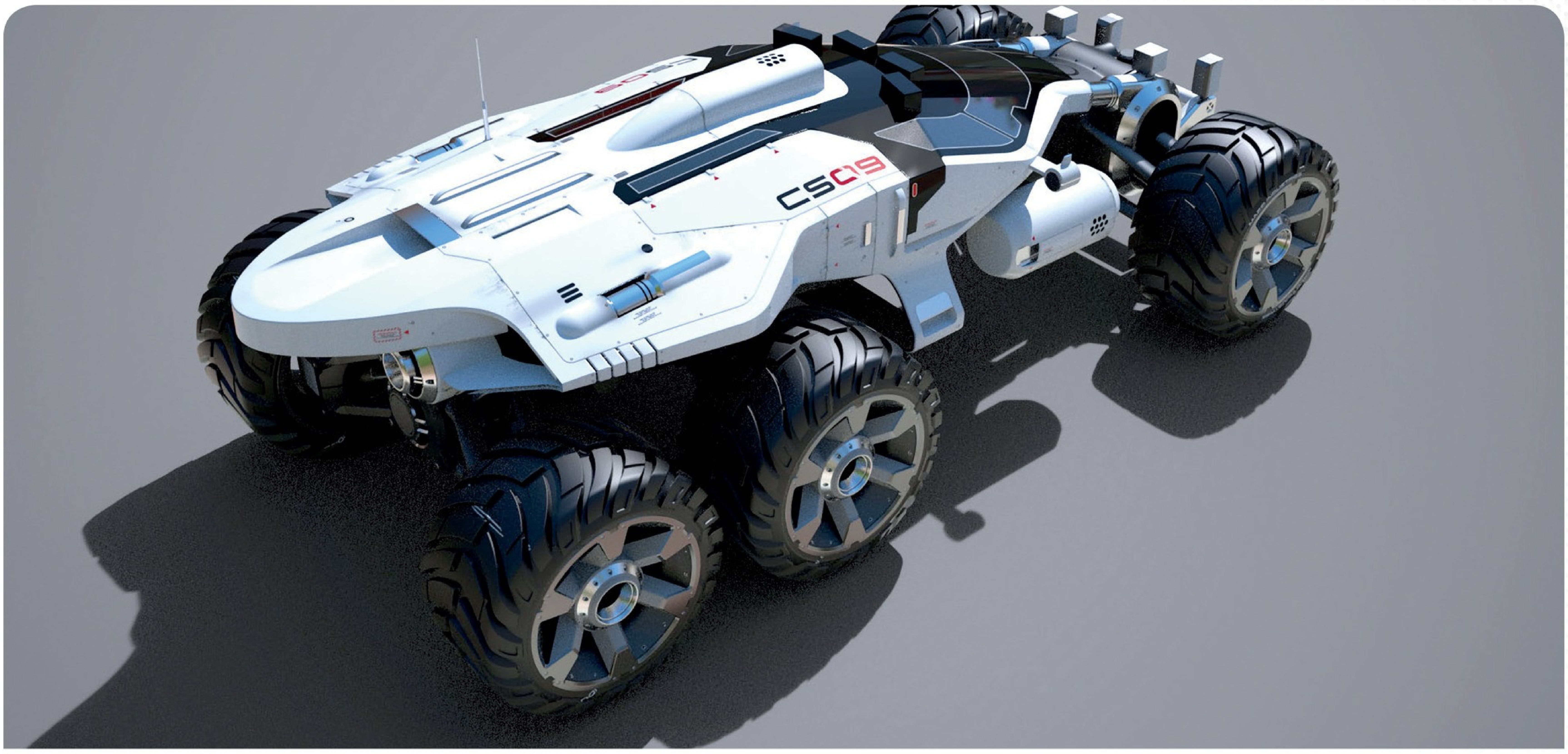


SB: The bridge of the *Tempest* was always something that we wanted to have a panoramic feel while also evoking the feeling that you were looking through a helmet.





JB: No other *Andromeda* model was as demanding as the Nomad ND1. Making sure all of its operational pieces functioned was quite a challenge. A lot of the original design had to be changed, but we ended up with a fully functional vehicle that will be a memorable addition to the franchise.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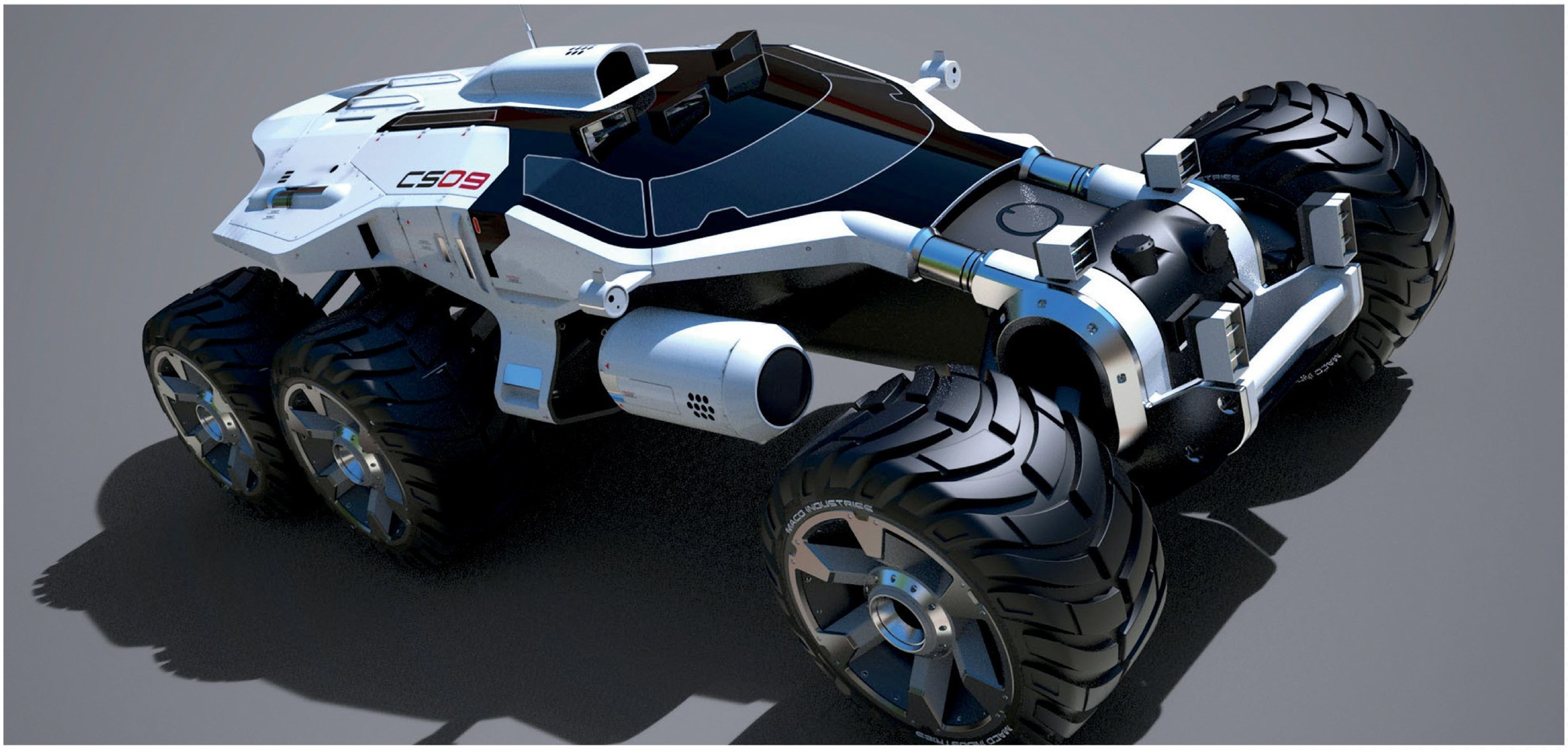
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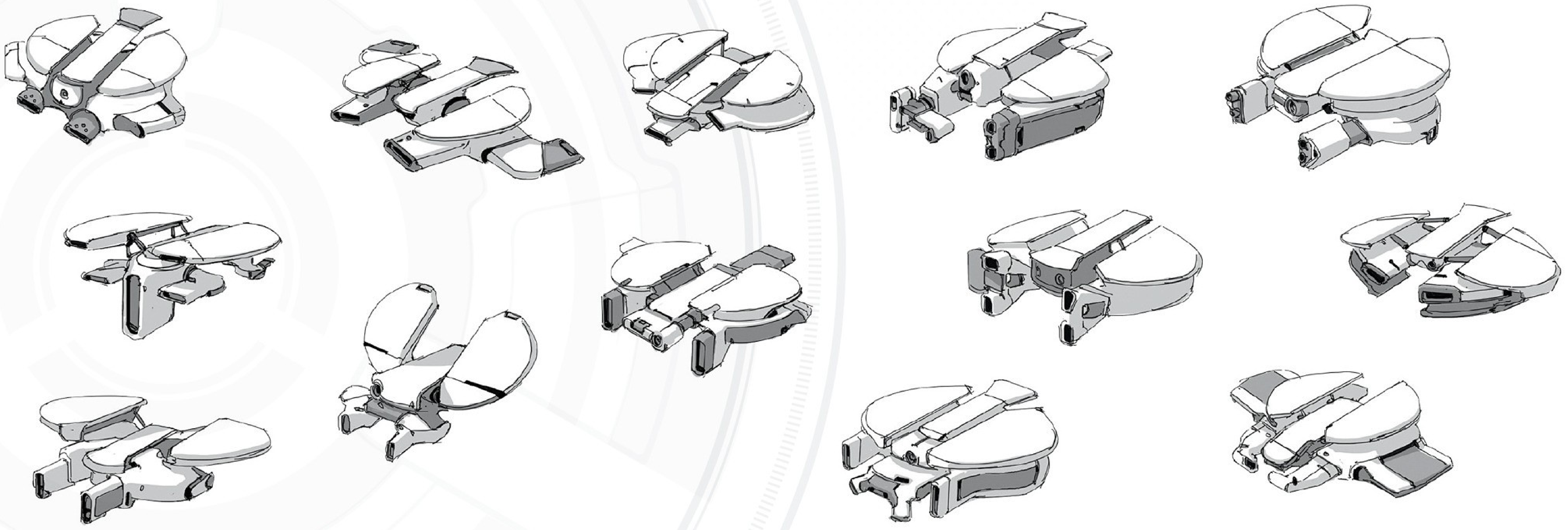
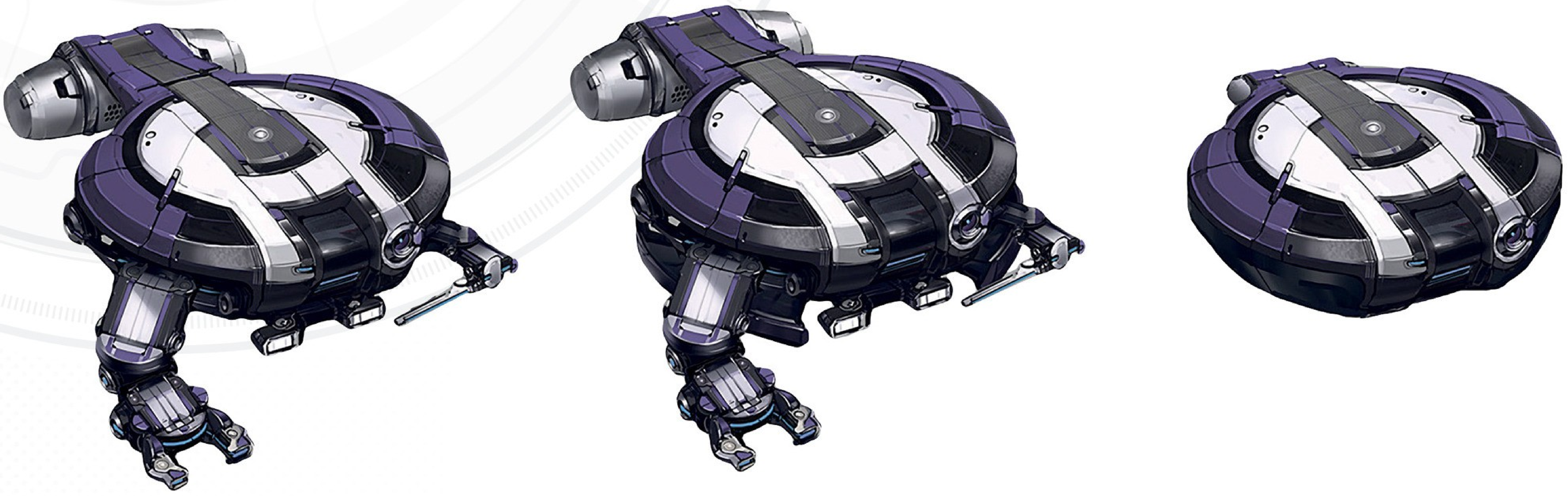
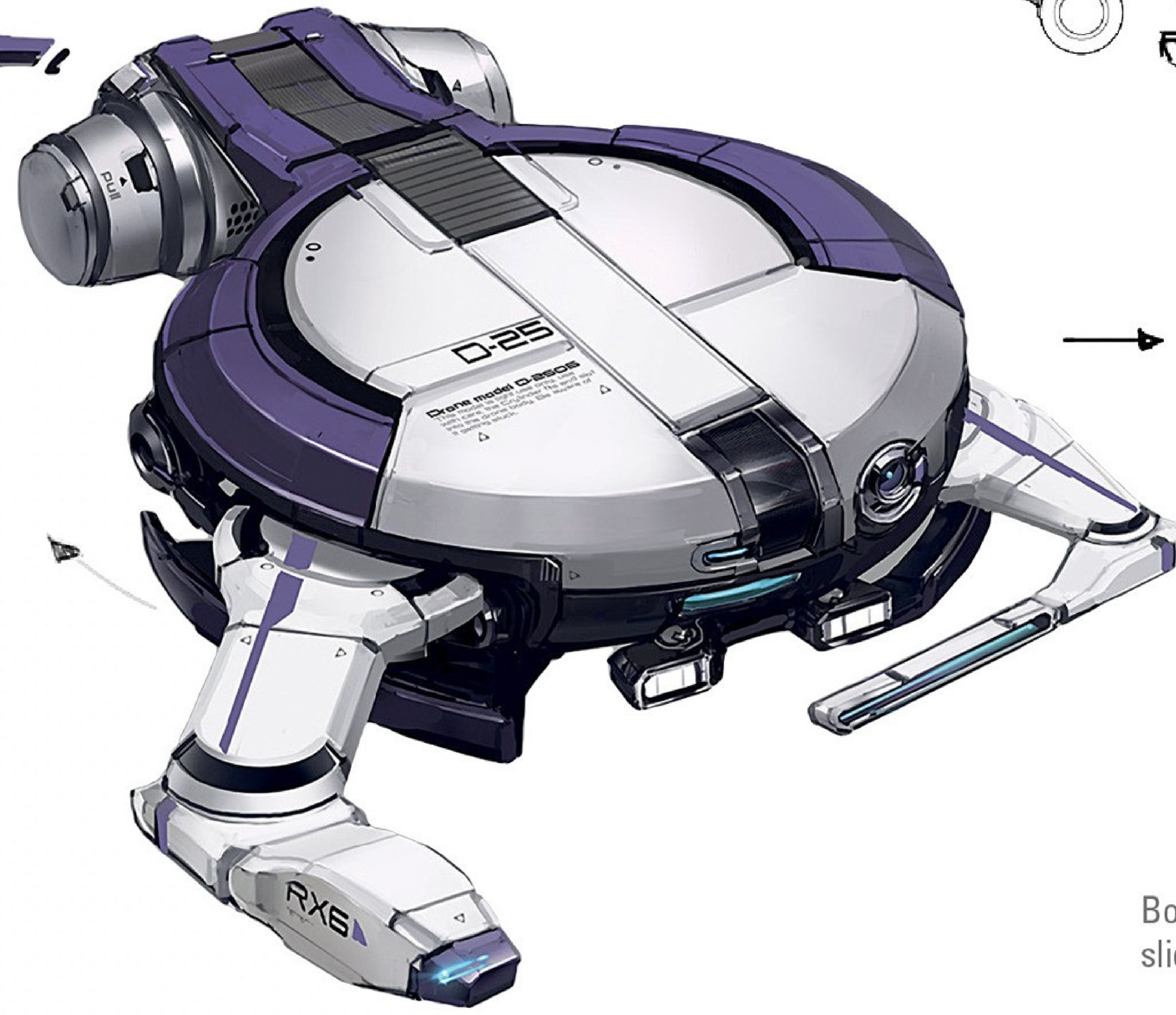
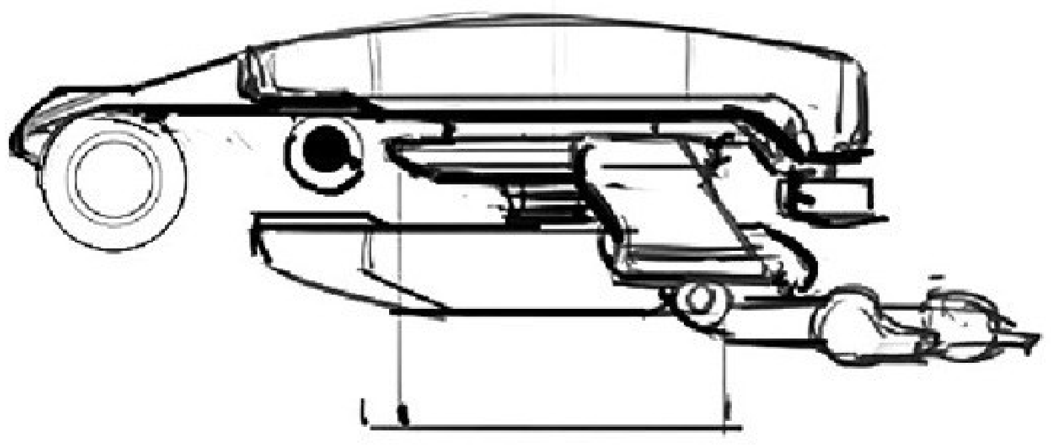
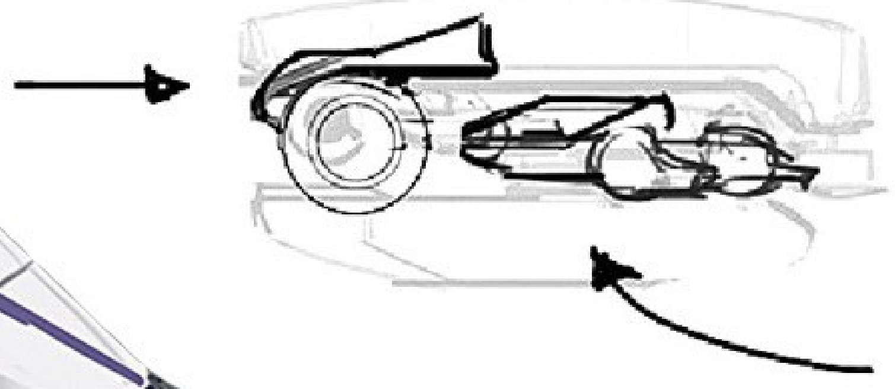




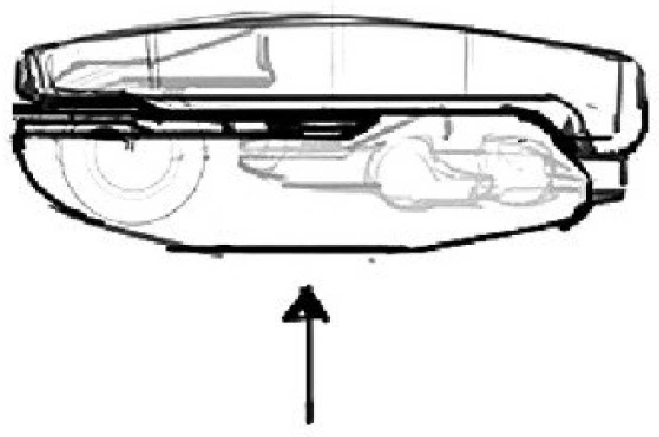




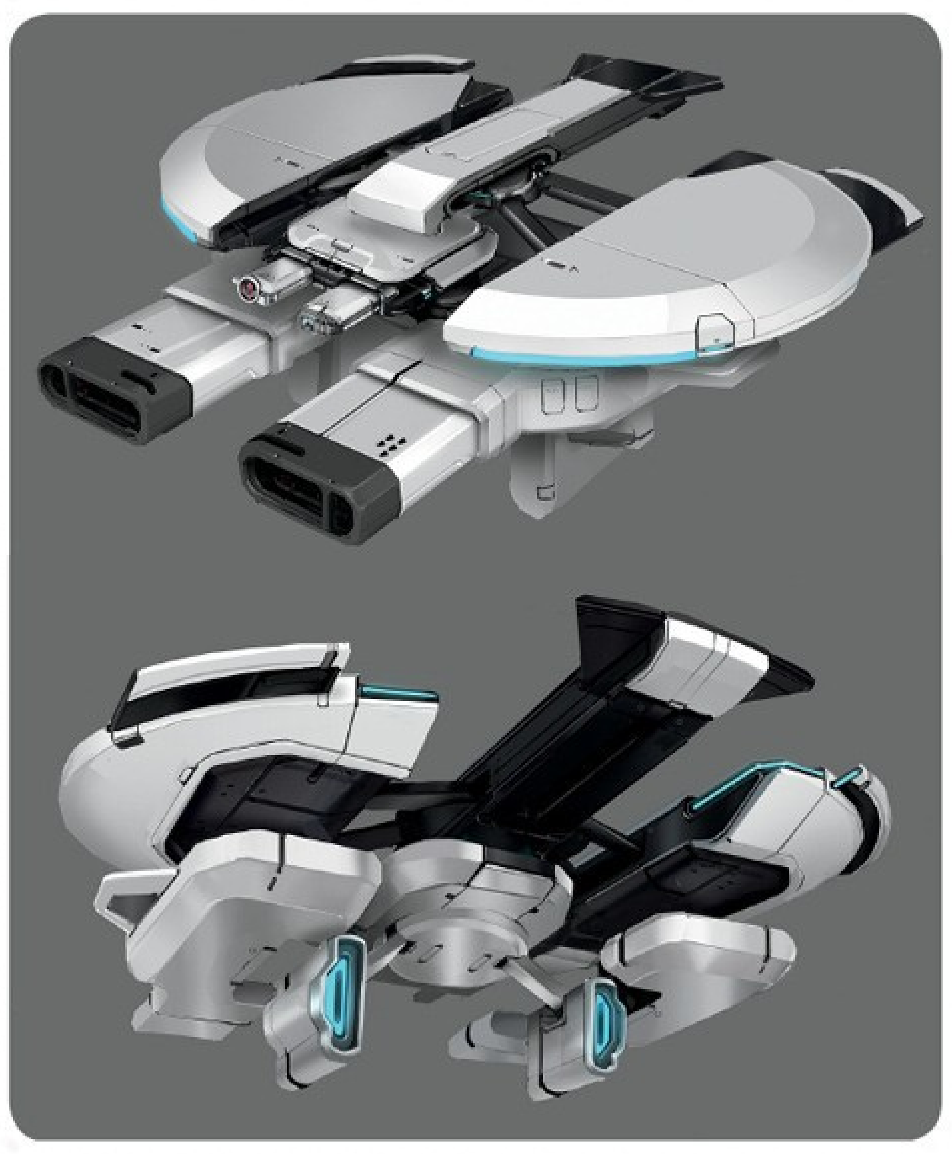
The mining arm swivels on the disk underneath the drone.



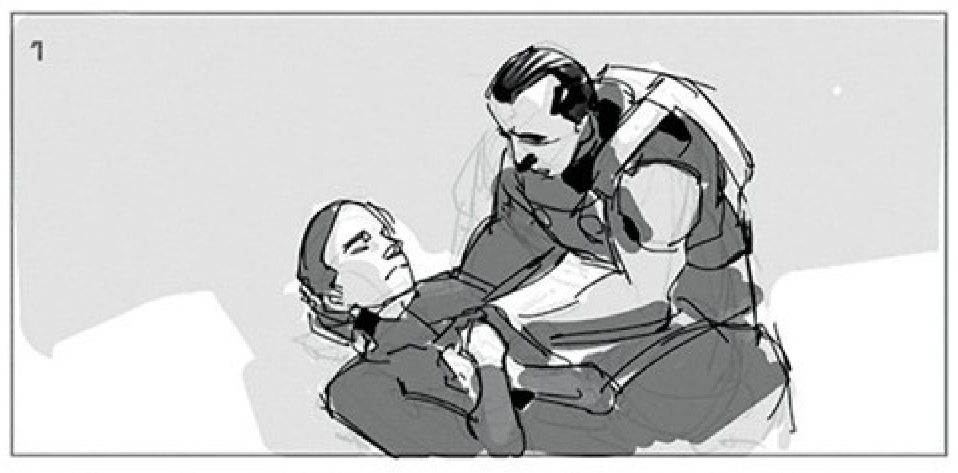
Tail piece slides in, arm folds inward.



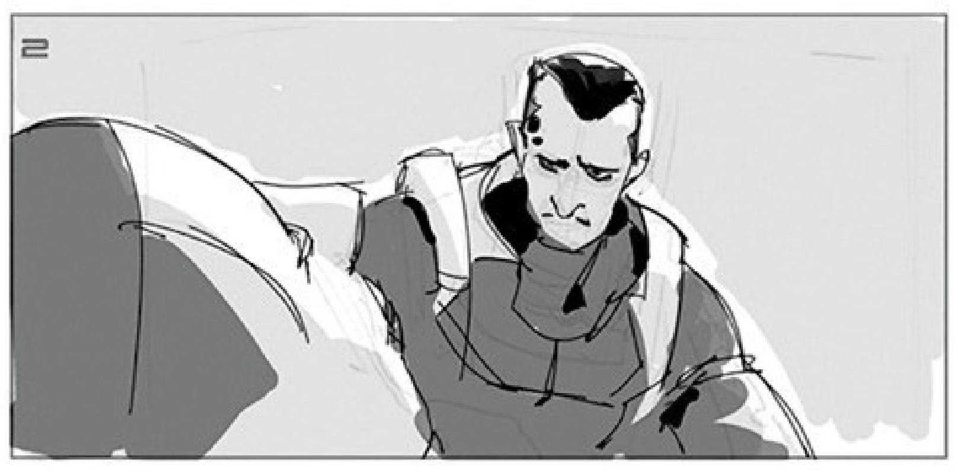
Bottom piece closes itself up and slides back into the Nomad.

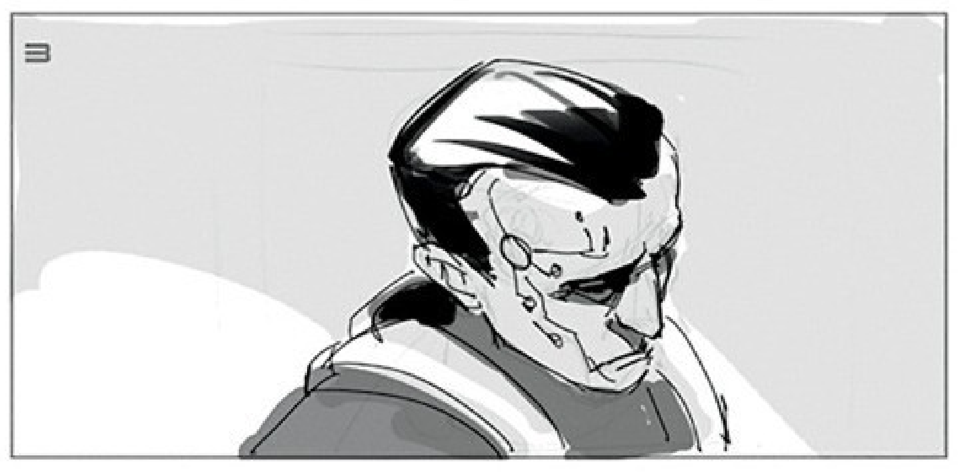


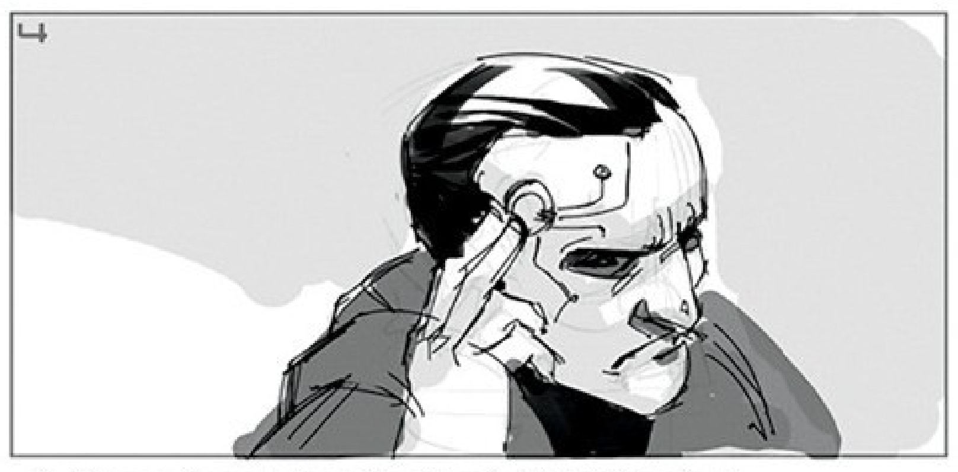
JB: The mining drone was originally part of the Nomad. It closed up into a disk and sat in the rear of the vehicle. When in use it would eject from the chassis and open up into its flying form. It was a very interesting design, which ultimately ended up being used as the Pathfinder's assault turret.



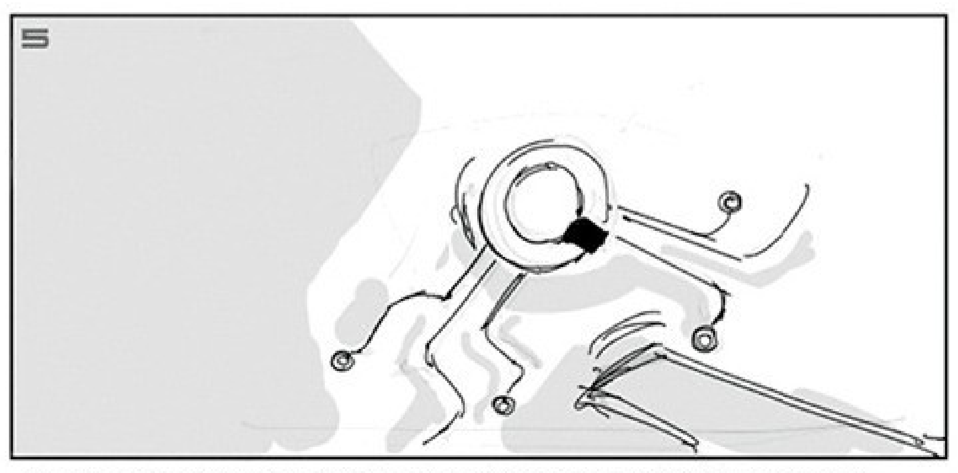
-Father Jones finds Fem-jones, to save fem-jones, he needs to give her the S.A.M. implant



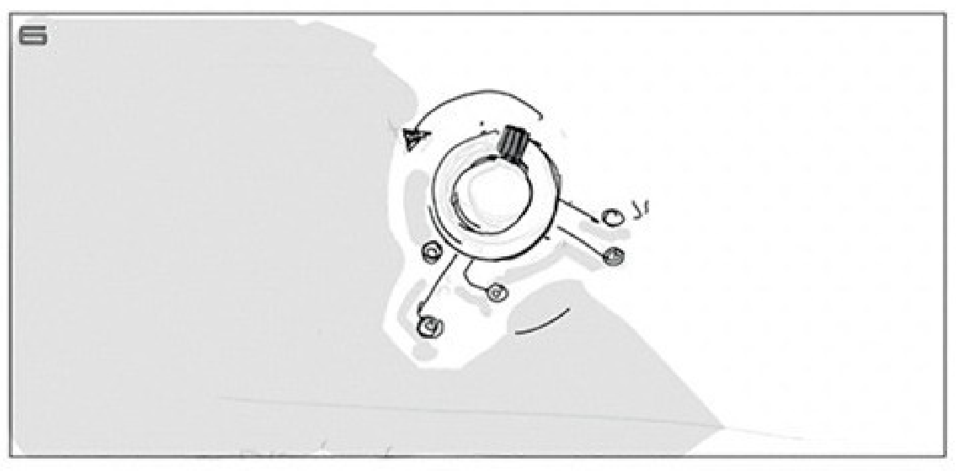


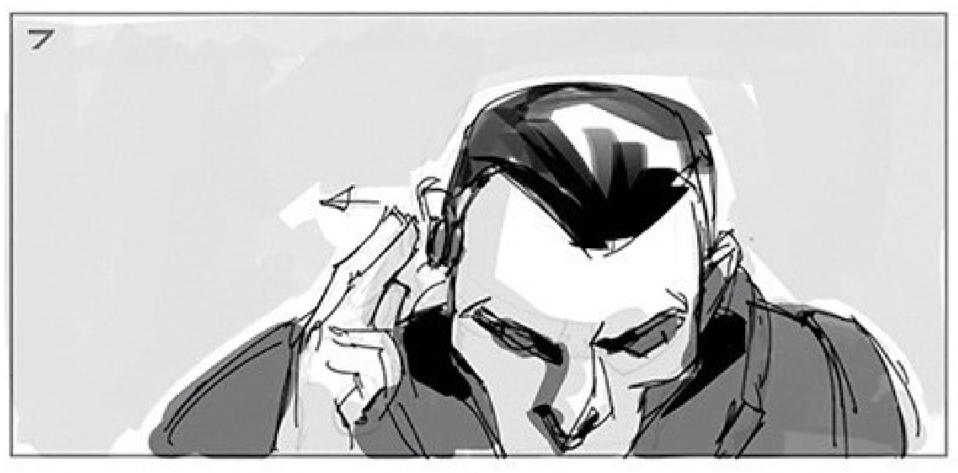


-Father Jones toggles the S.A.M. implant

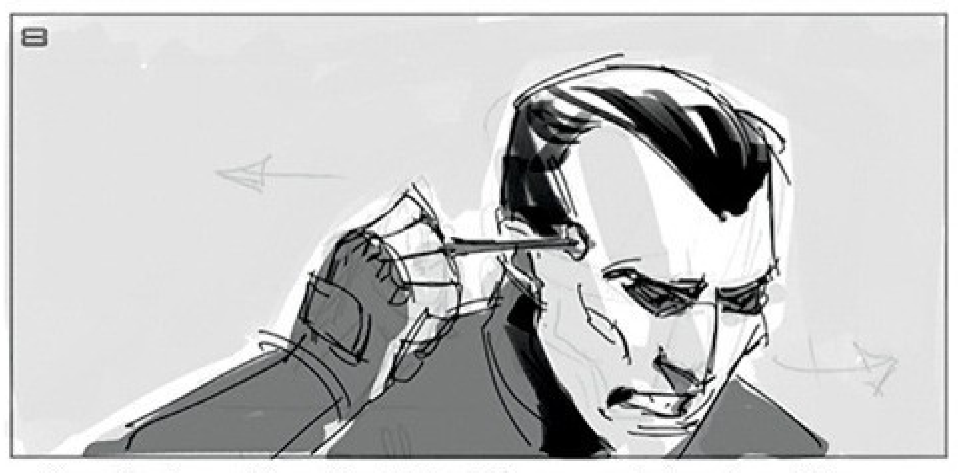


-Implant rotates and the tendrils are retracted back into the main anchor piece

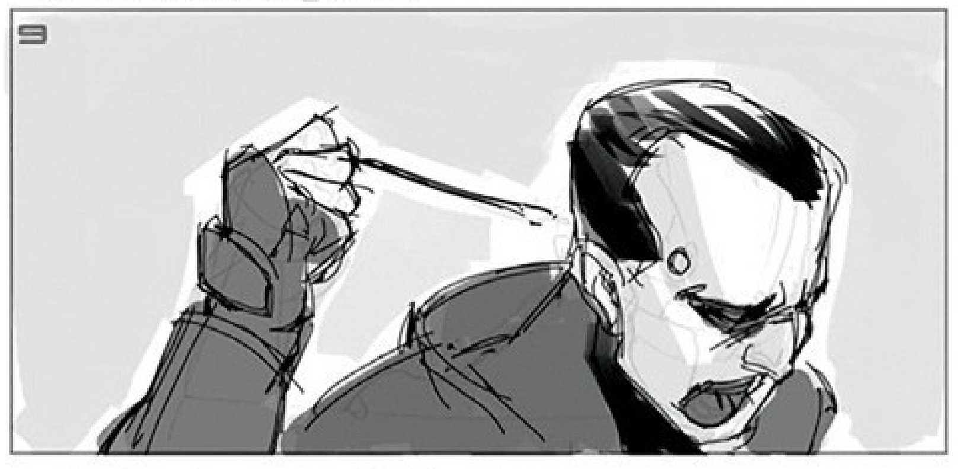




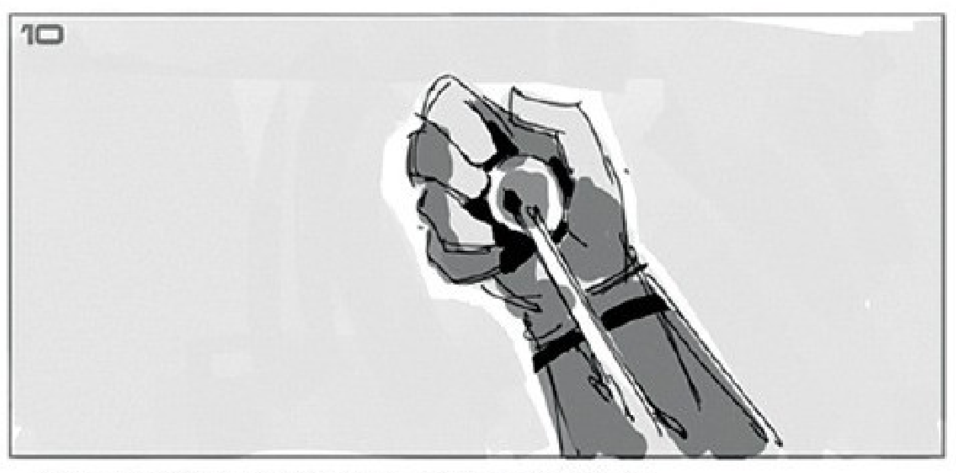
-the Implant pops out, father Jones grabs the implant



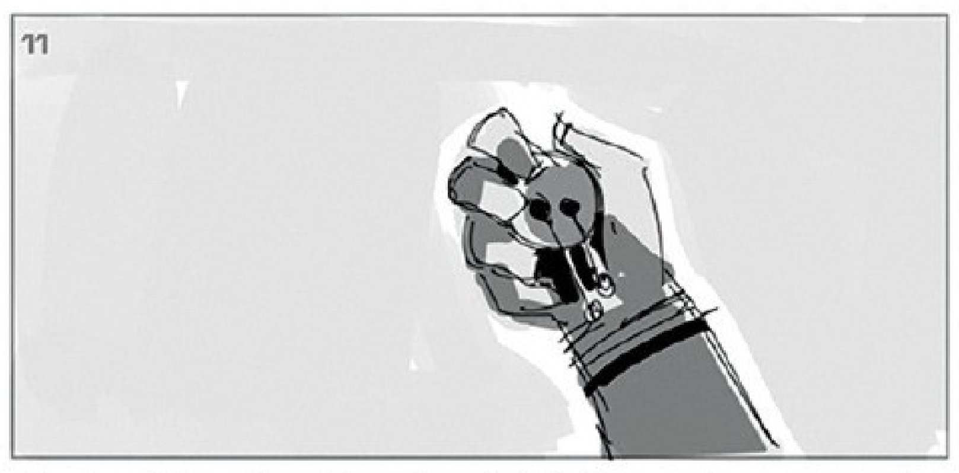
-he starts pulling it out, but the remaining tendrils are still planted deep into his brian, and attached to his main nervous systems



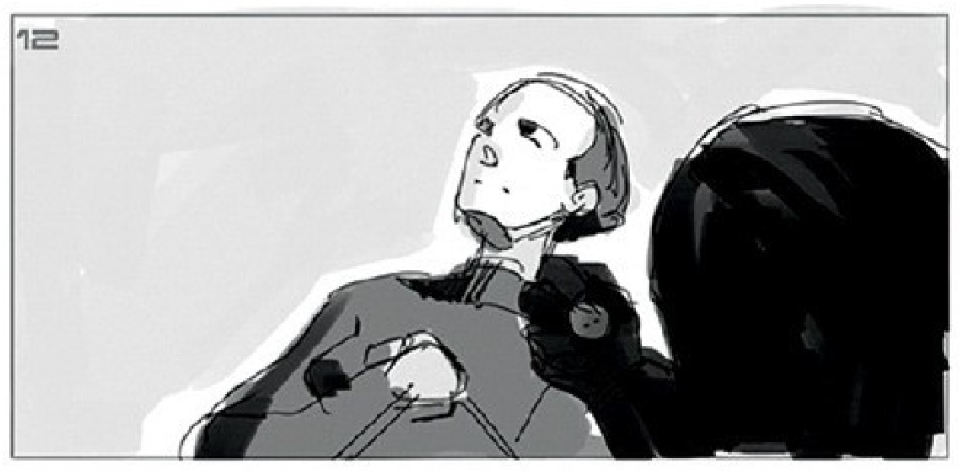
--father Jones yanks it out

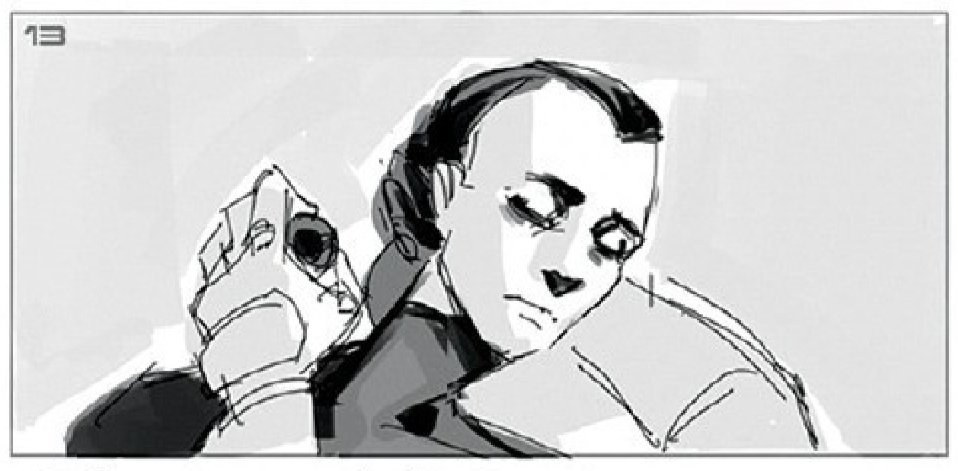


-blood drips off the remaining tendrils

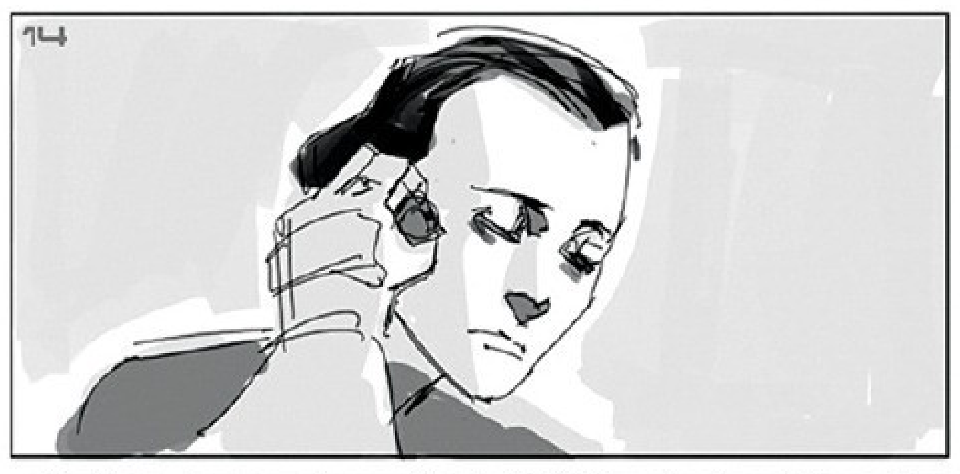


-the tendrils retract itself back into the main anchor piece

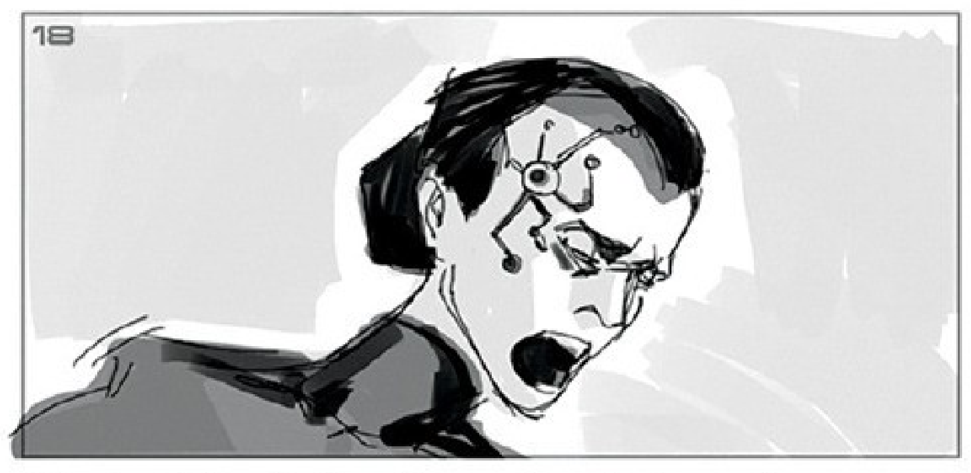




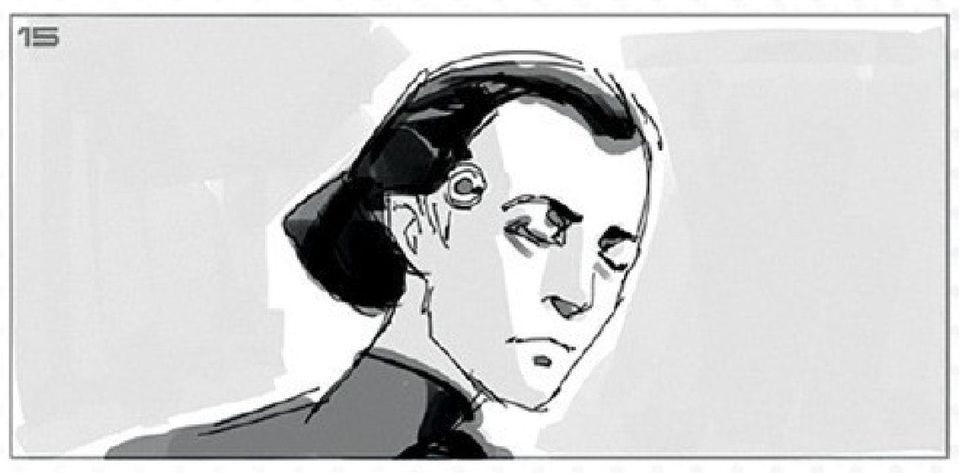
-Father Jones gently lifts Fem-Jones

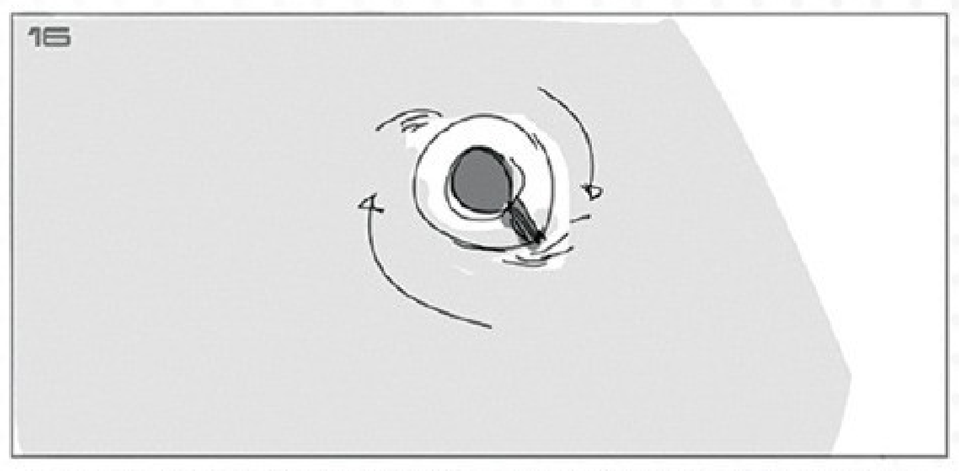


-Father Jones places the S.A.M. implant on Fem-Jones temple and triggers it

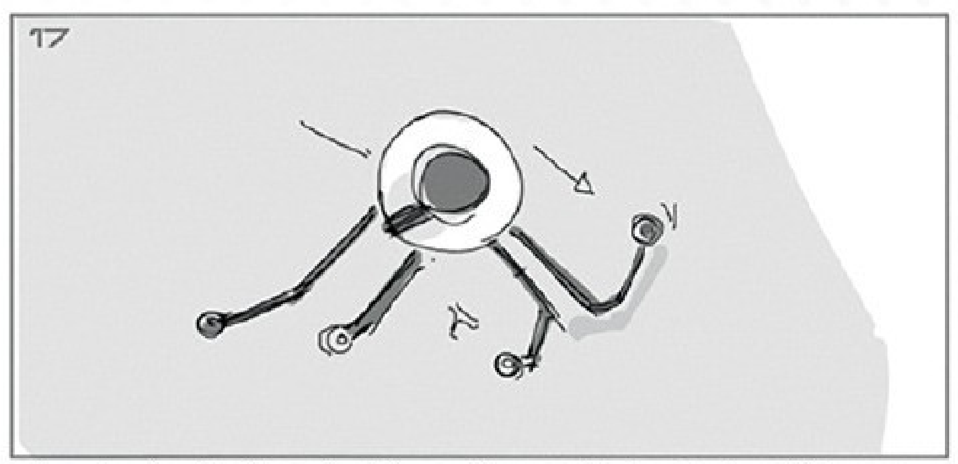


-The tendrils attaches themself on to the major nervous system and other key areas

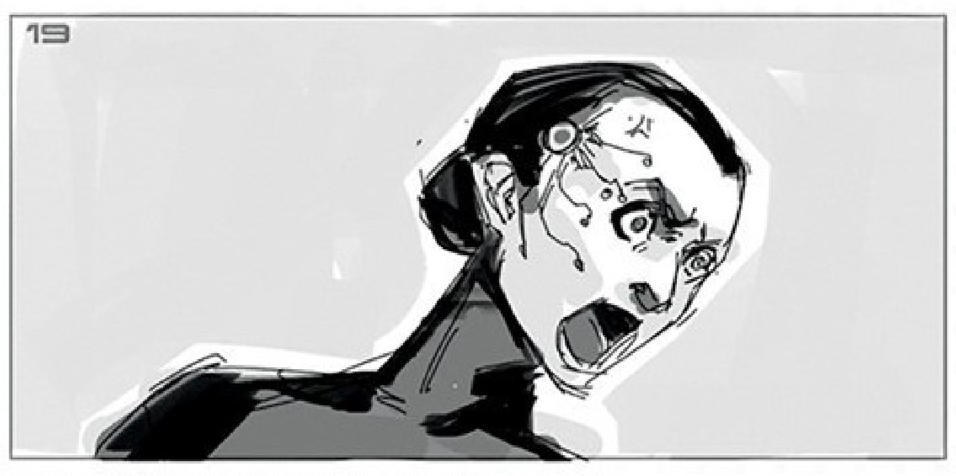




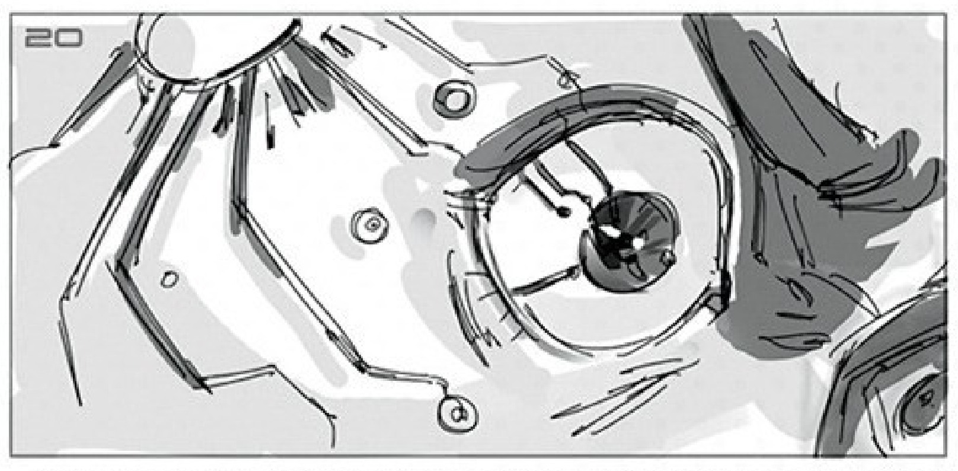
-Implant rotates and gently cut itself and sets into the skin of Fem-jones



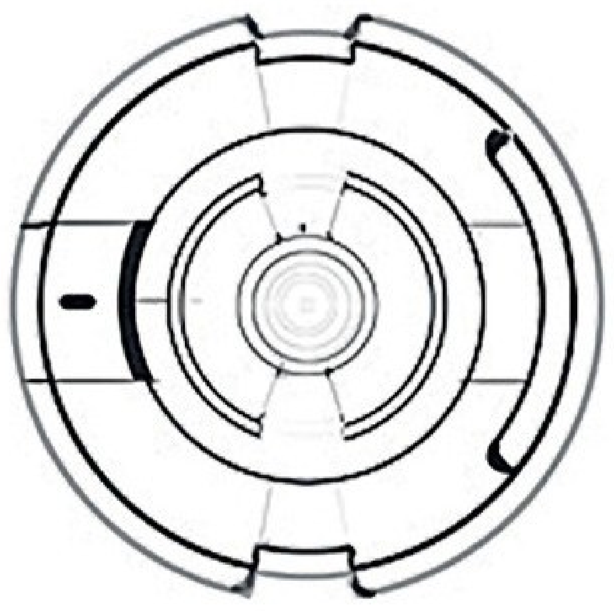
-Implant adapting to Fem-Jones biology, tendrils are spread out, and dig itself through under the skin

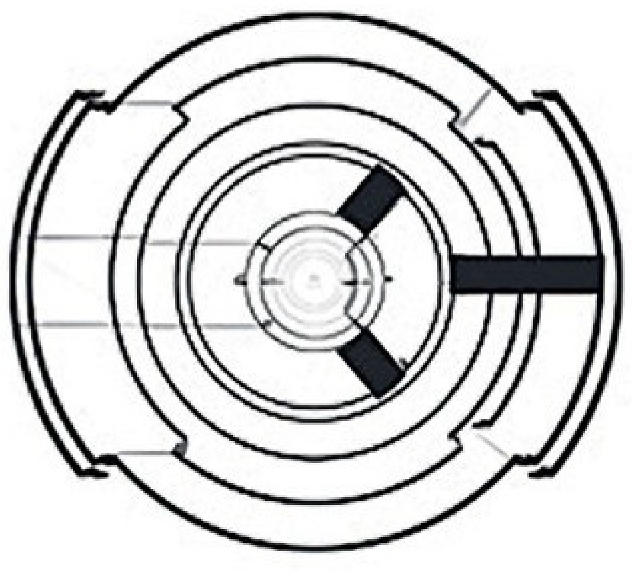


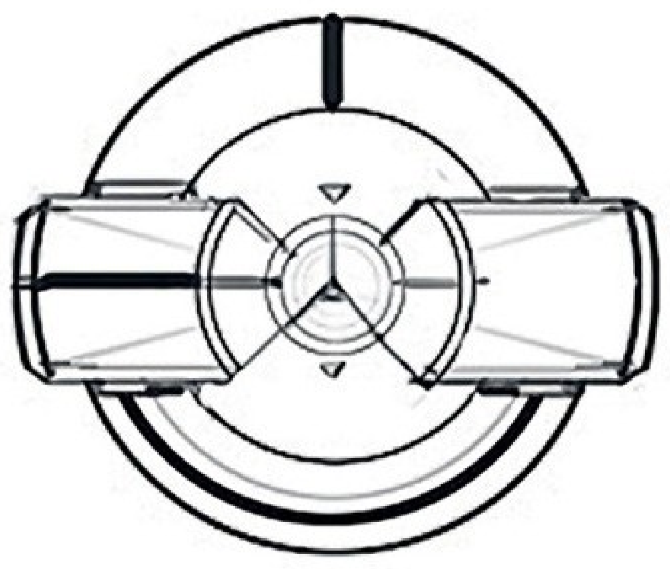
-Implant continues to spread

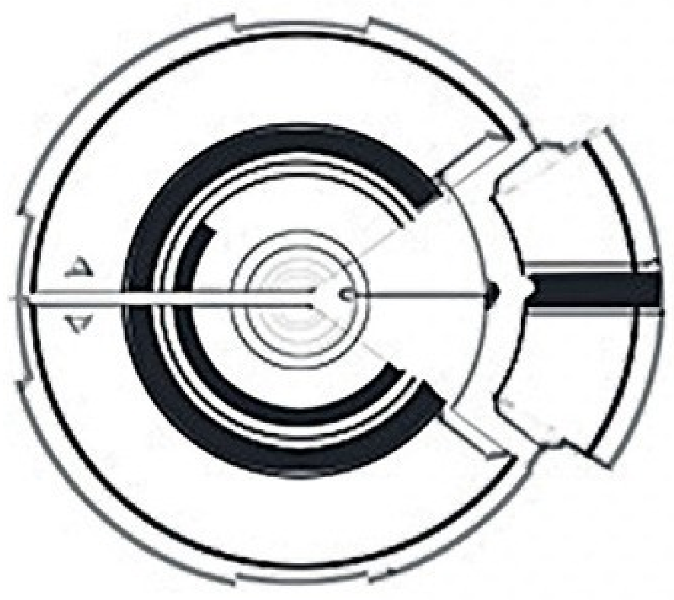


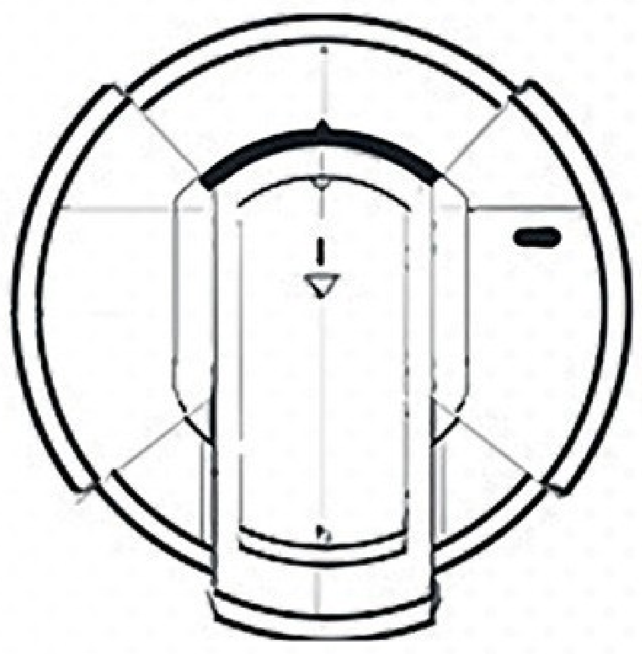
-the Tendrils splits up into smaller pieces and spread in to the eye

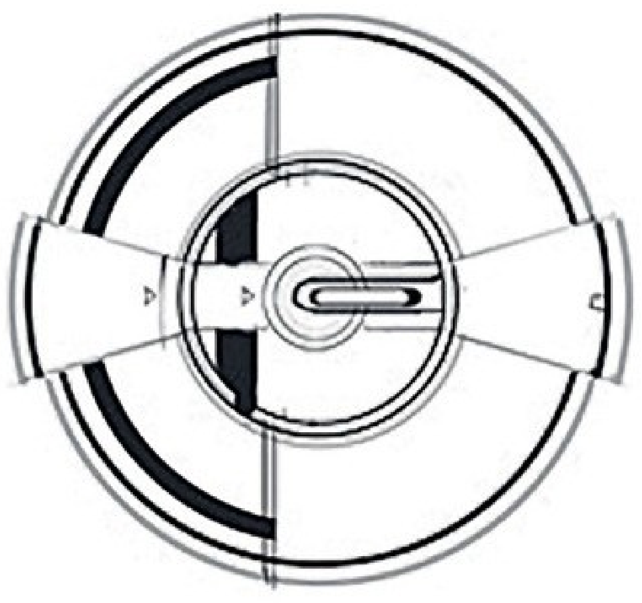


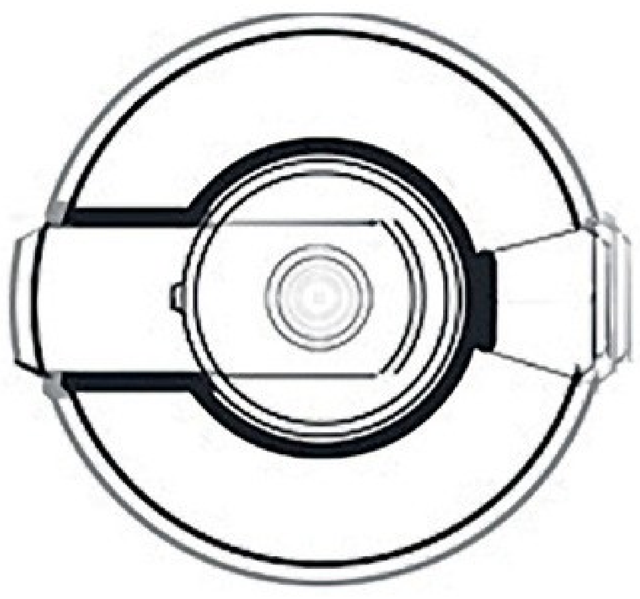


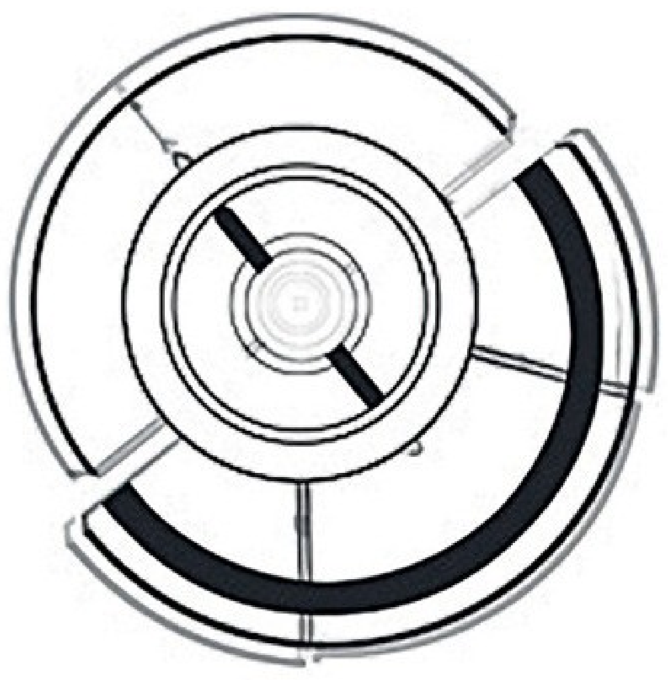


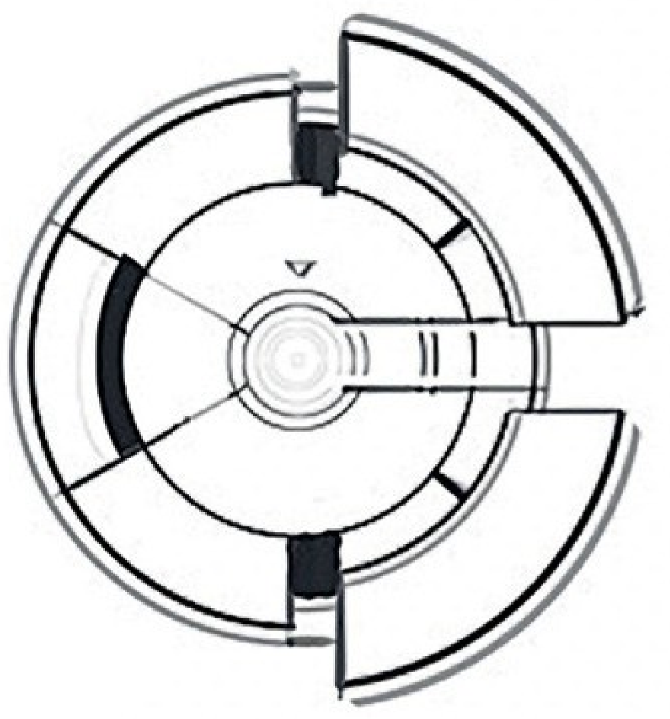


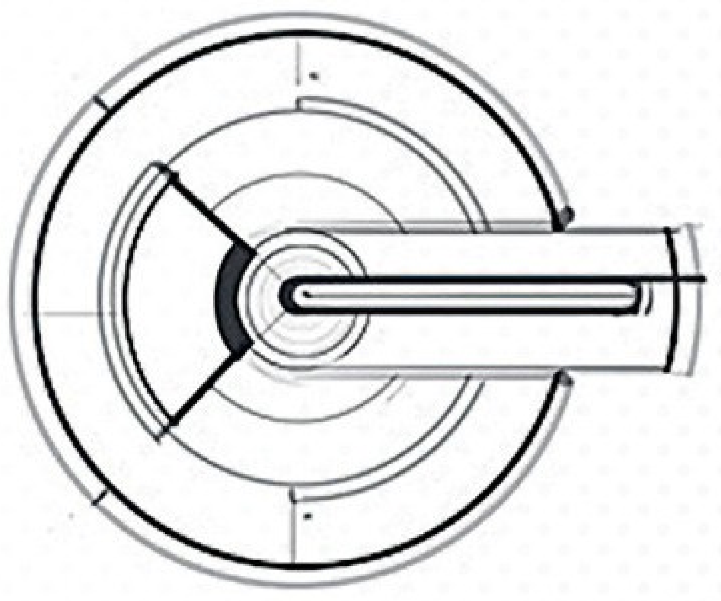


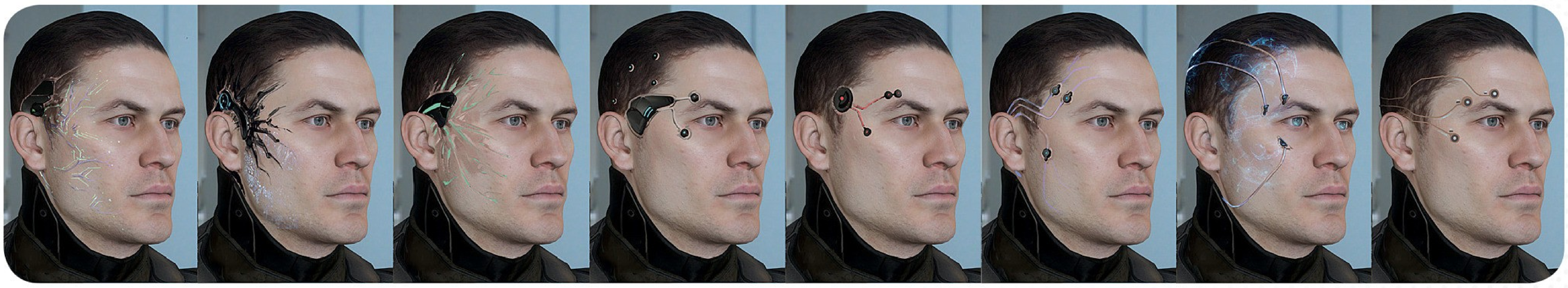












JM: This was some early exploratory work for the SAM implant before we decided to take a more elegant approach. It was originally hardwired into Ryder's father, and the act of removing it was meant to be a more damaging and scarring memory for the protagonist.

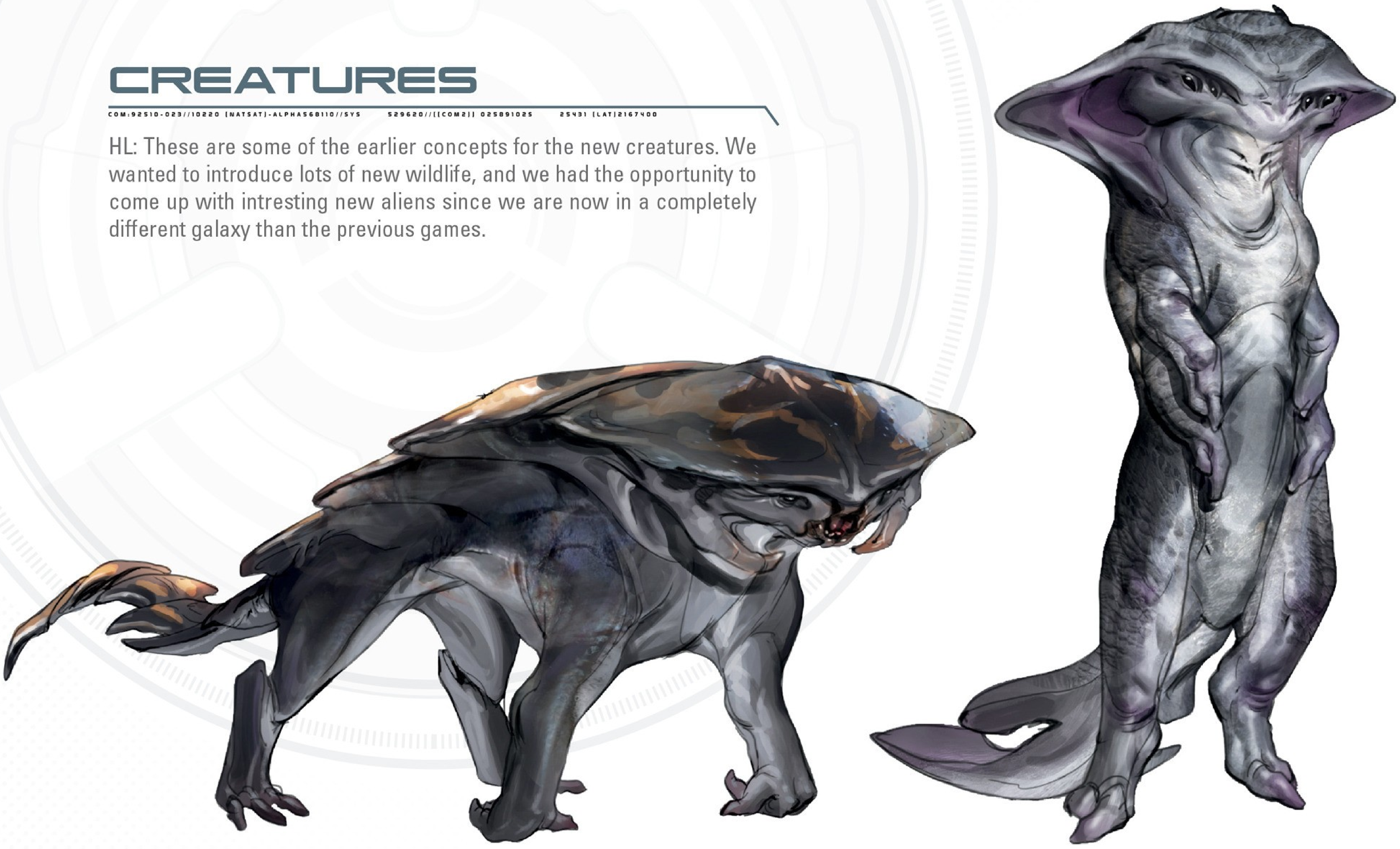
ANDROMEDA

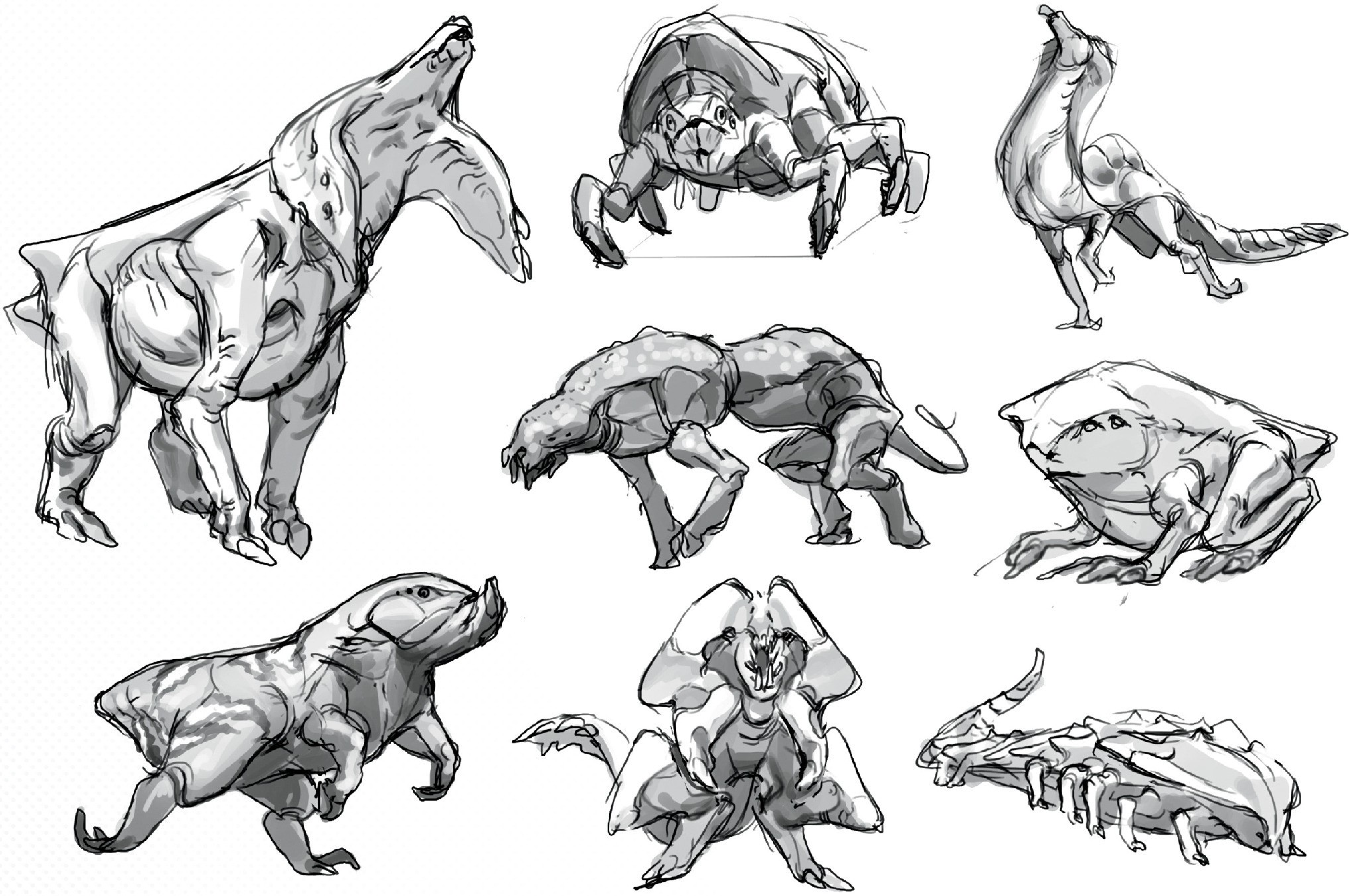
FIRST CONTACT PROTOCOL

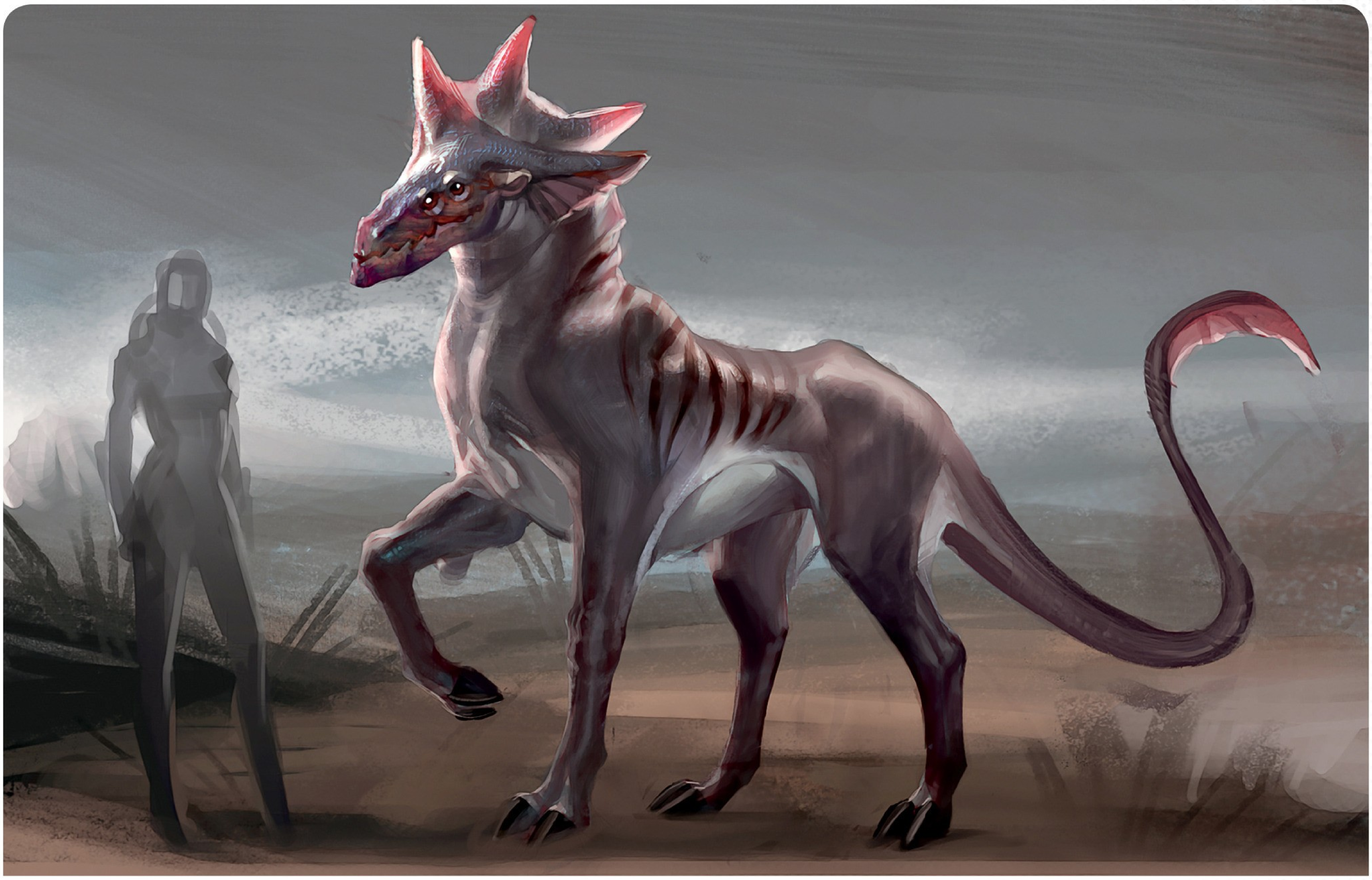
CREATURES

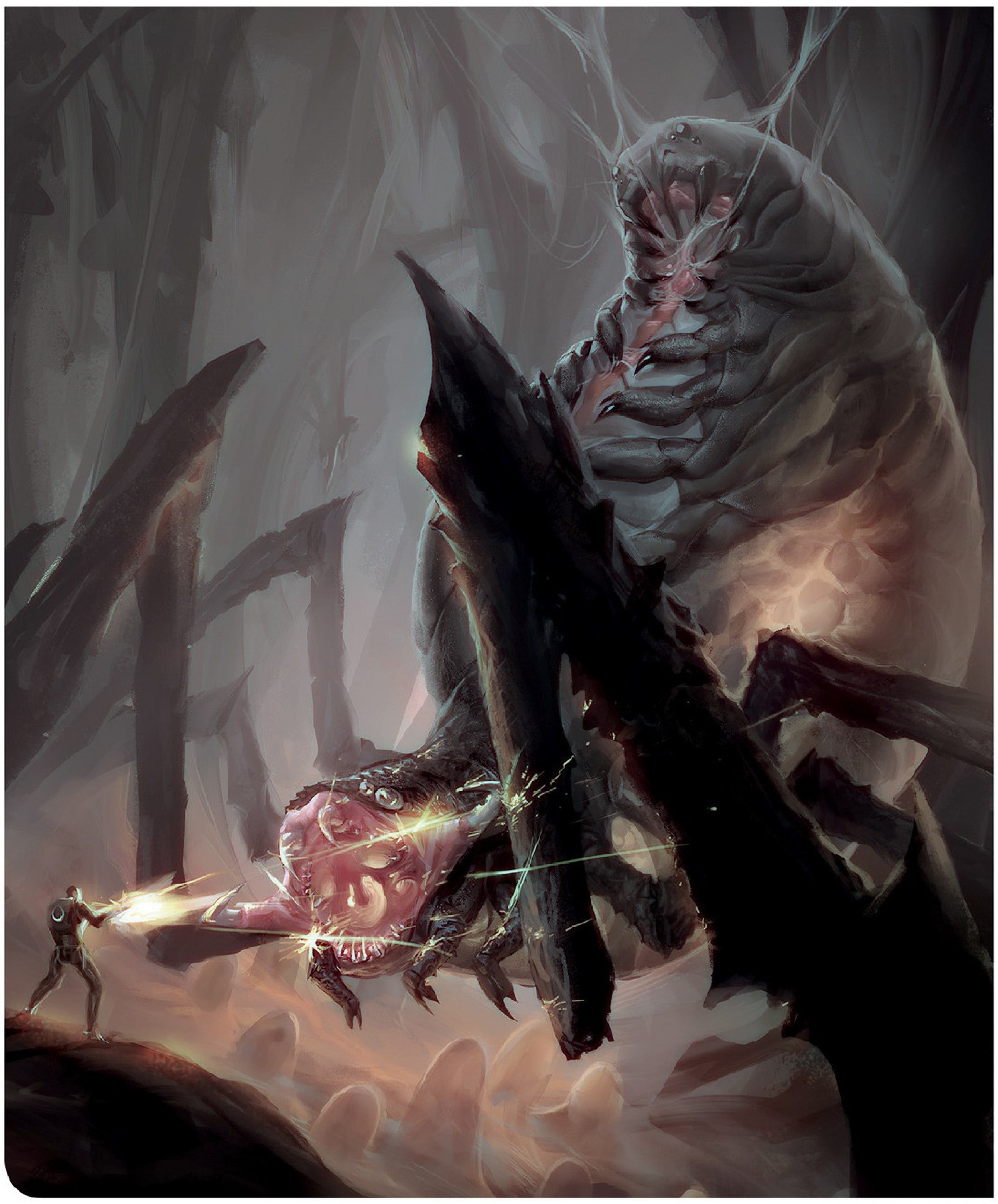
COM:92510-023//10220 [NATSAT]-ALPHA568110//SYS 529620//[[COM2]] 025891025 25431 [LAT]2167400

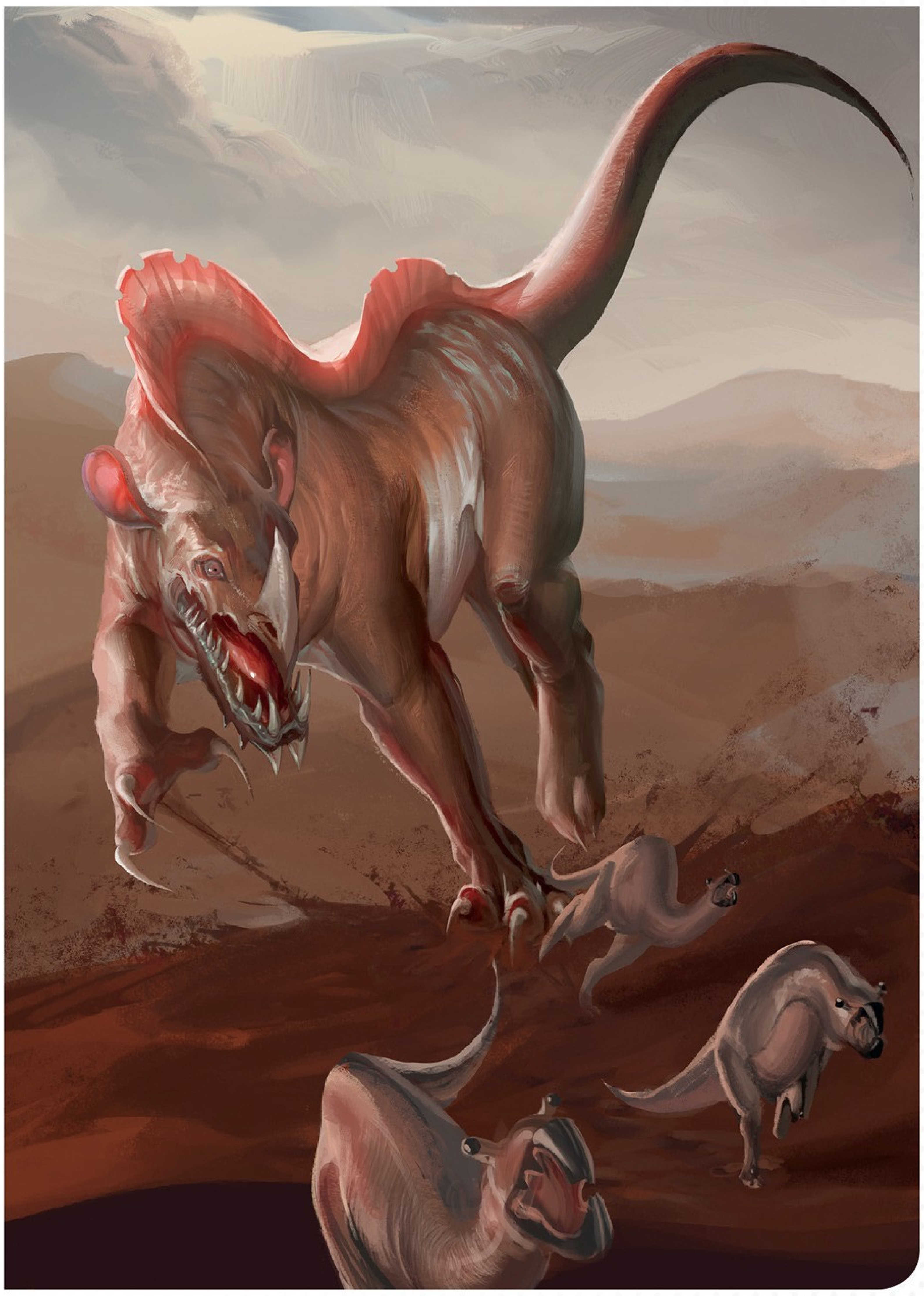
HL: These are some of the earlier concepts for the new creatures. We wanted to introduce lots of new wildlife, and we had the opportunity to come up with intresting new aliens since we are now in a completely different galaxy than the previous games.

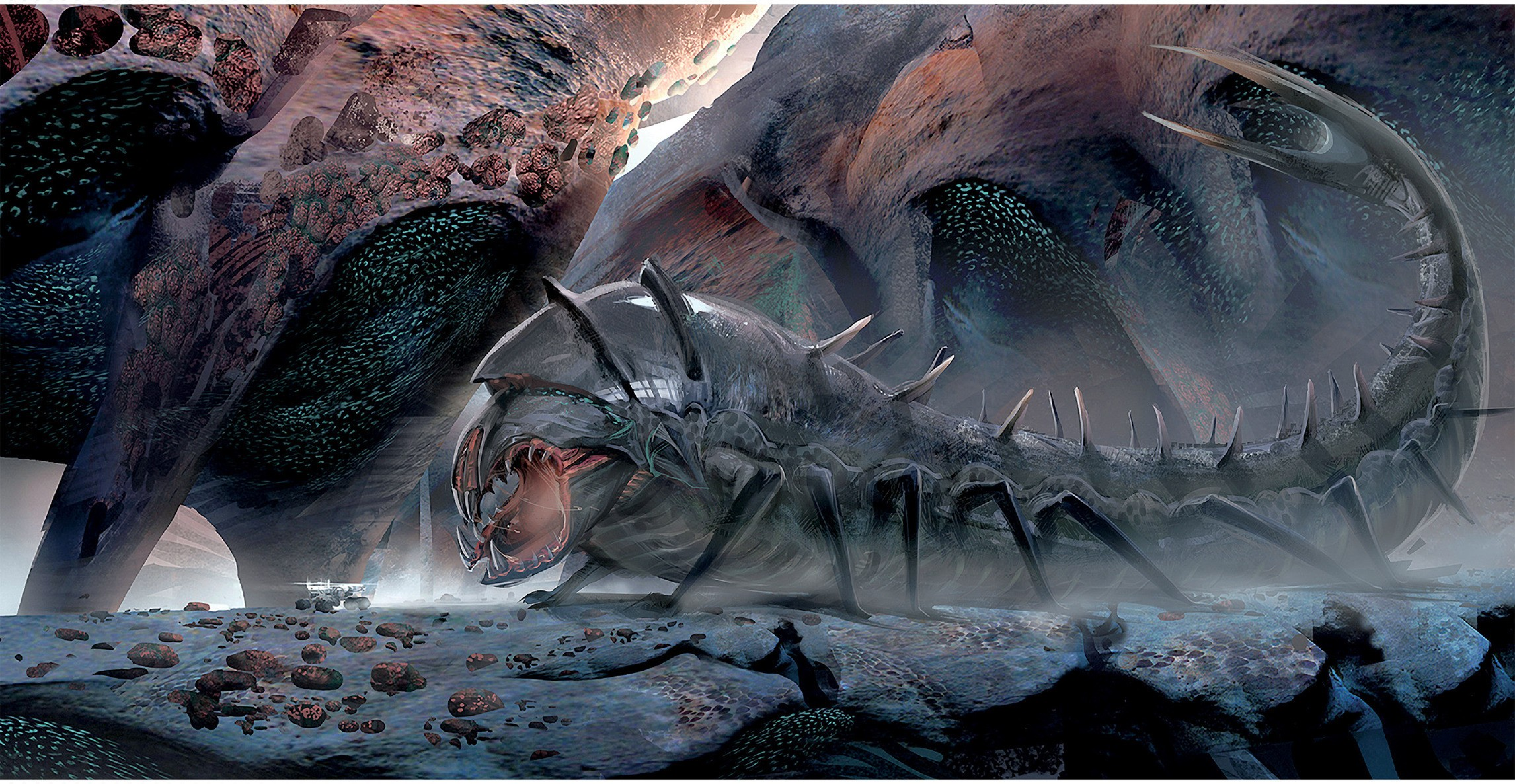


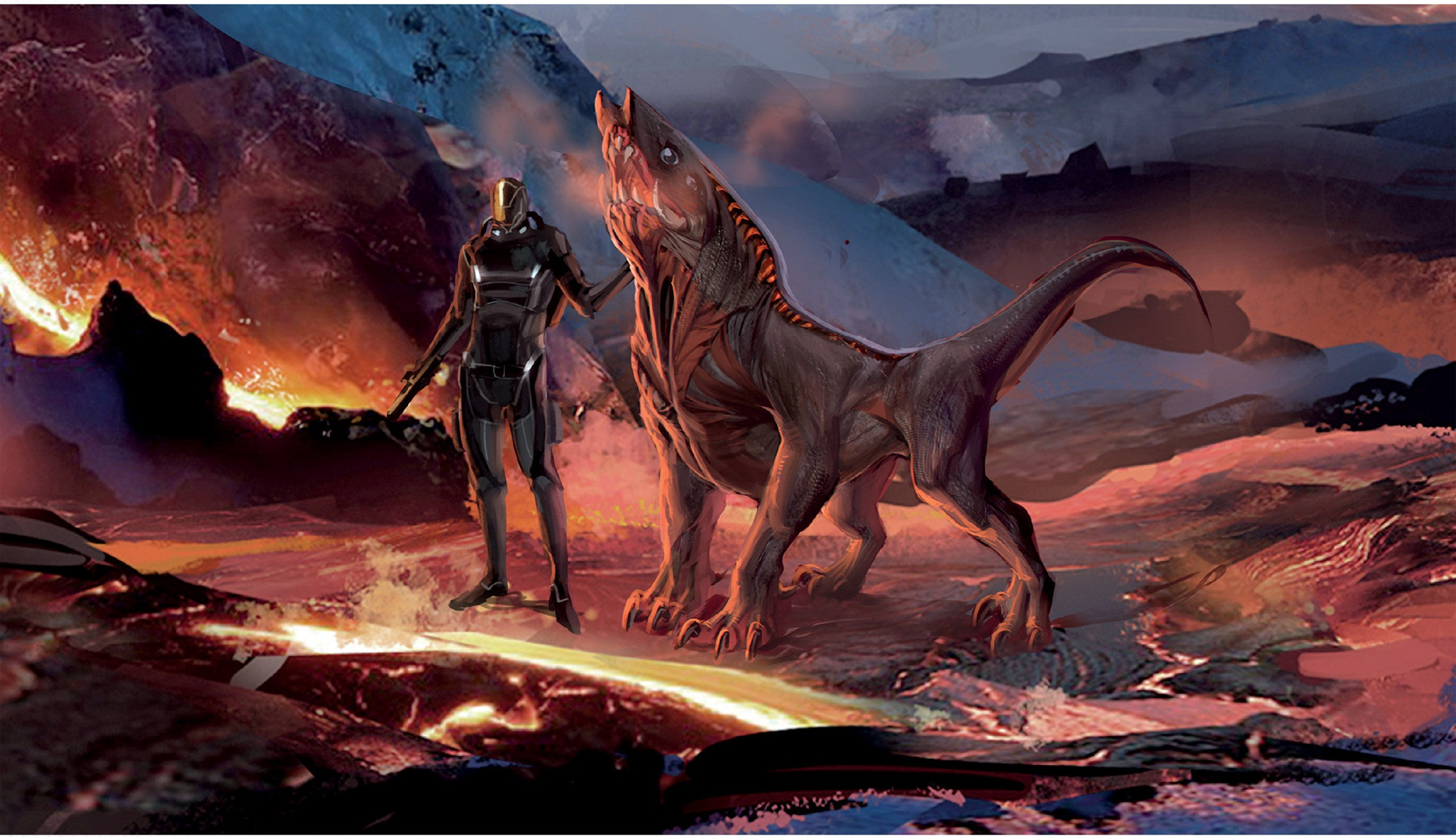




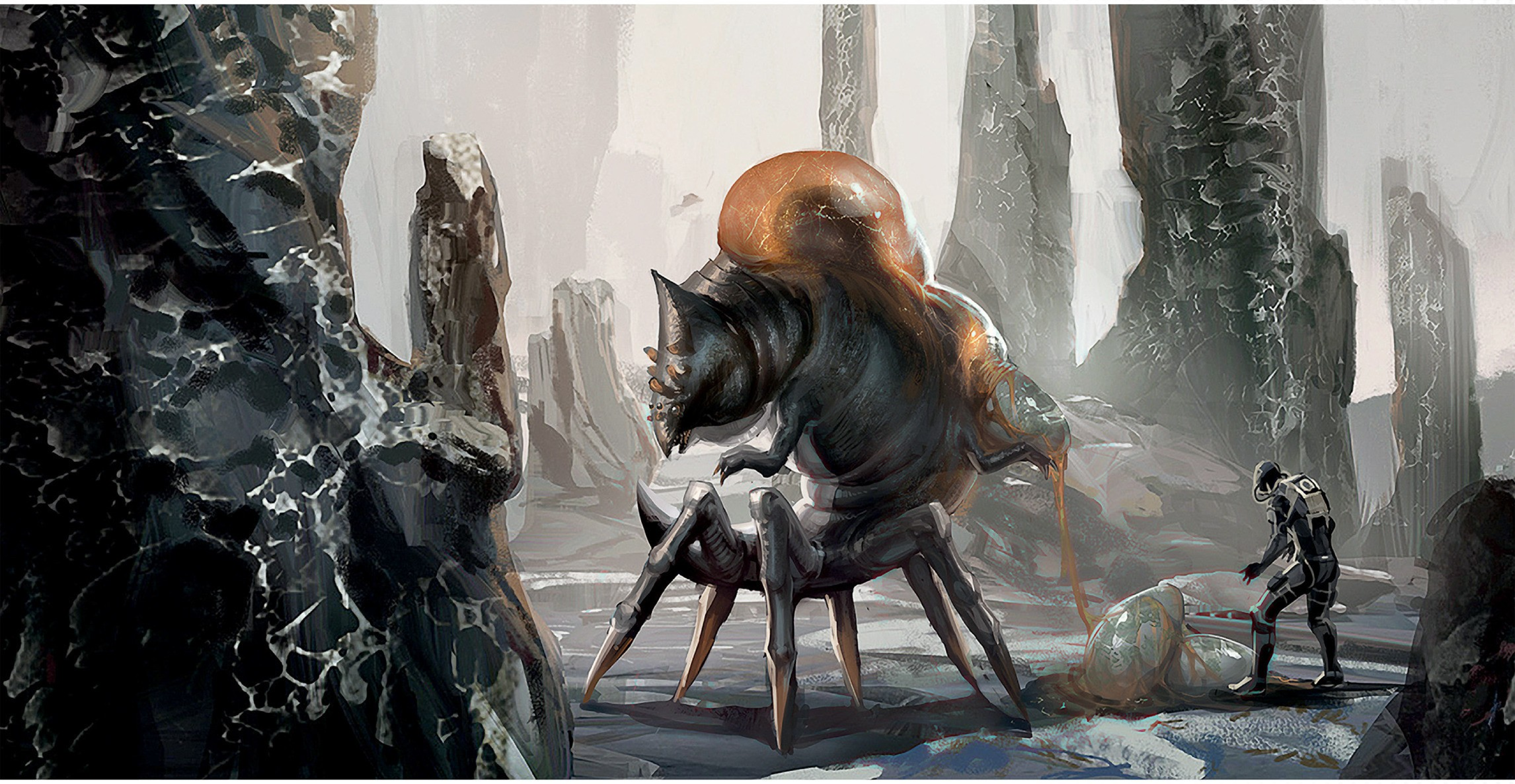


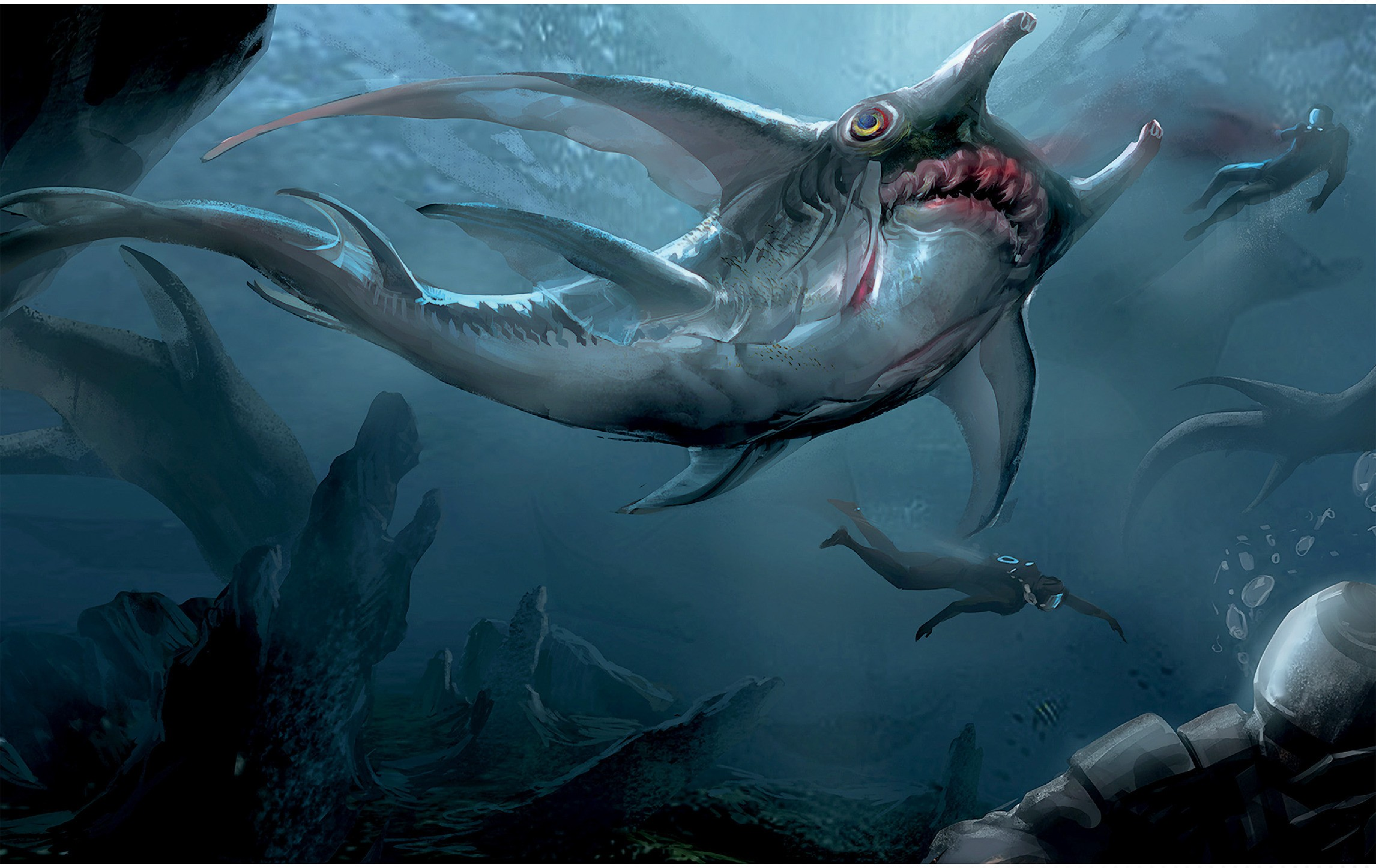


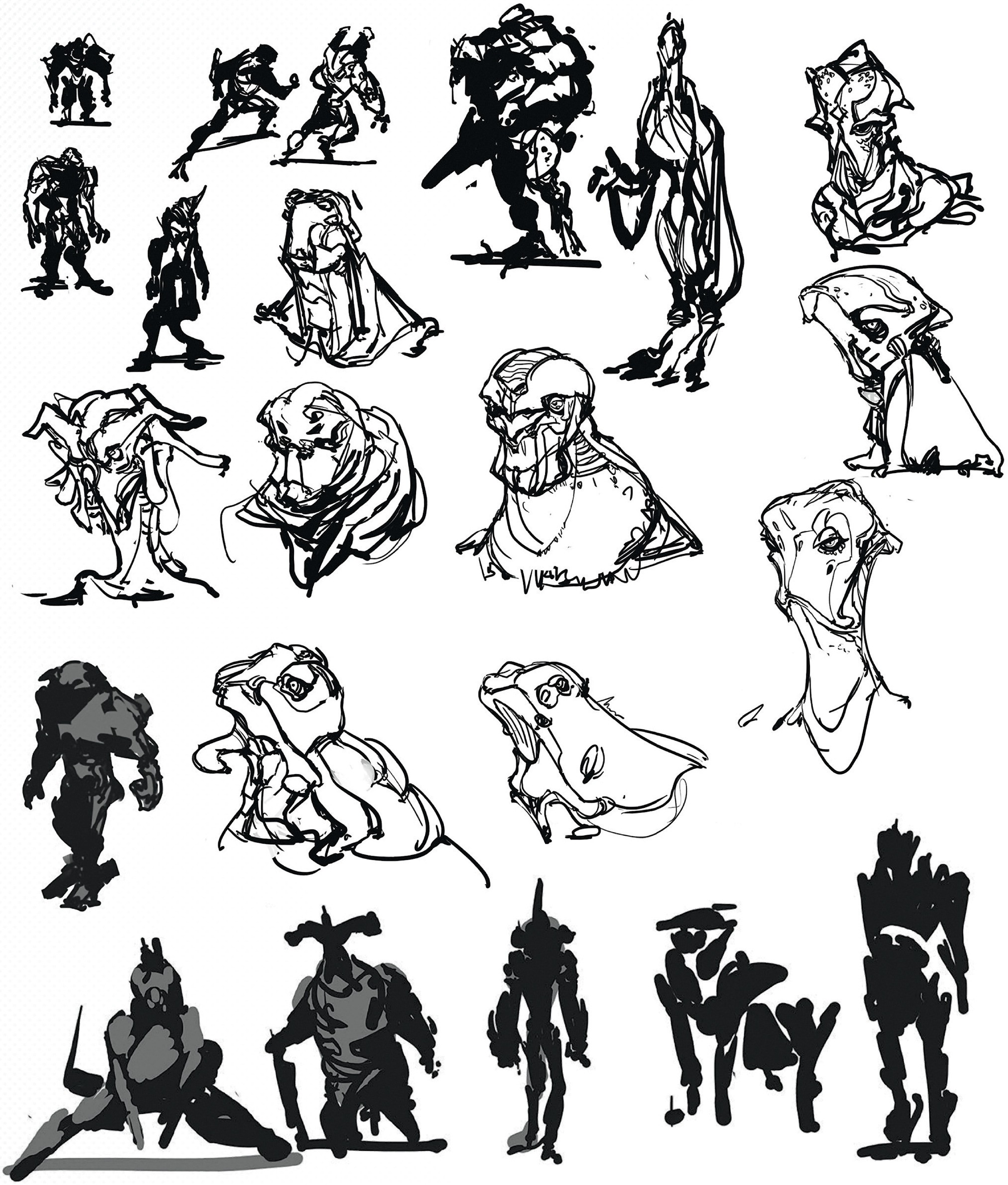




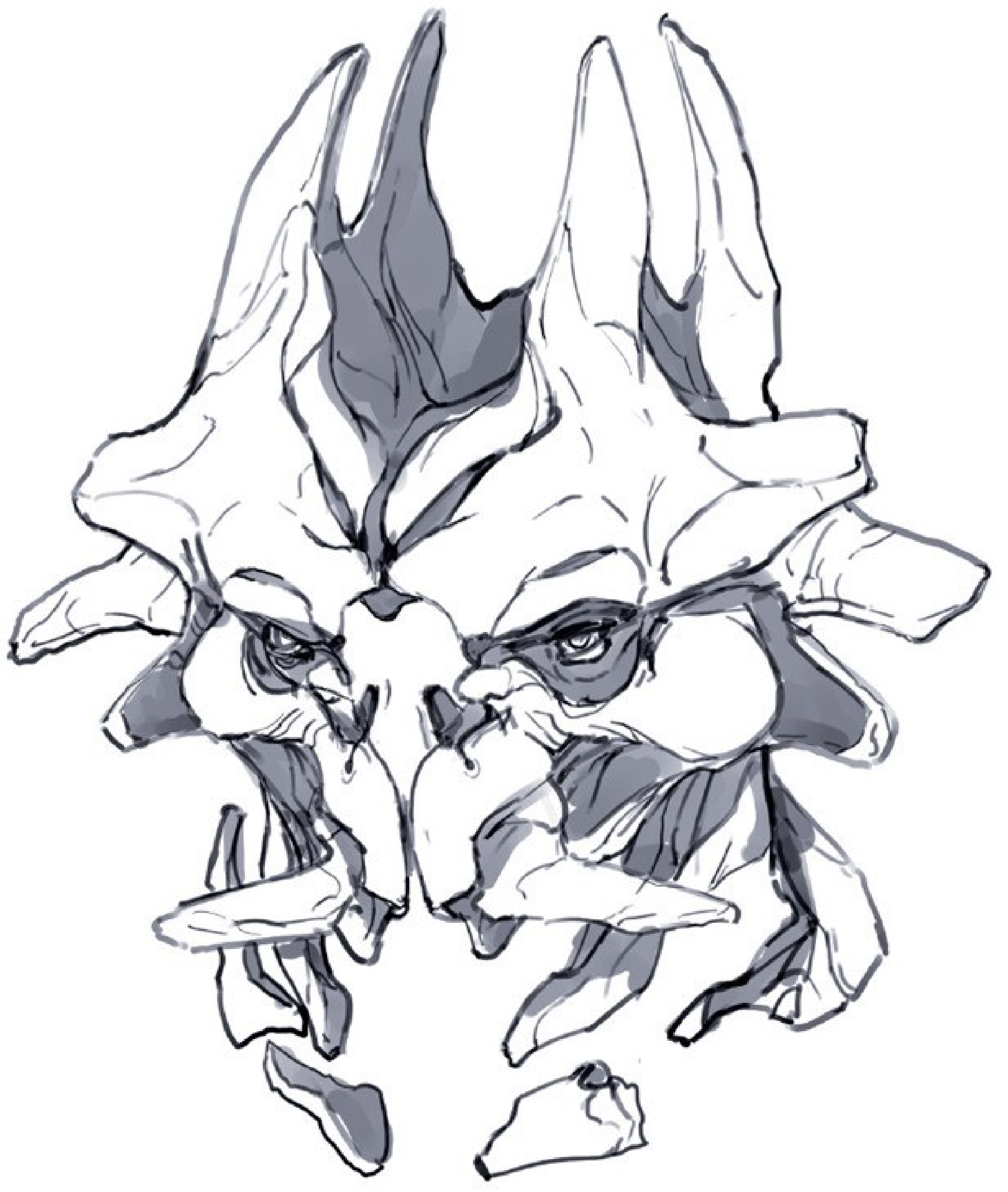
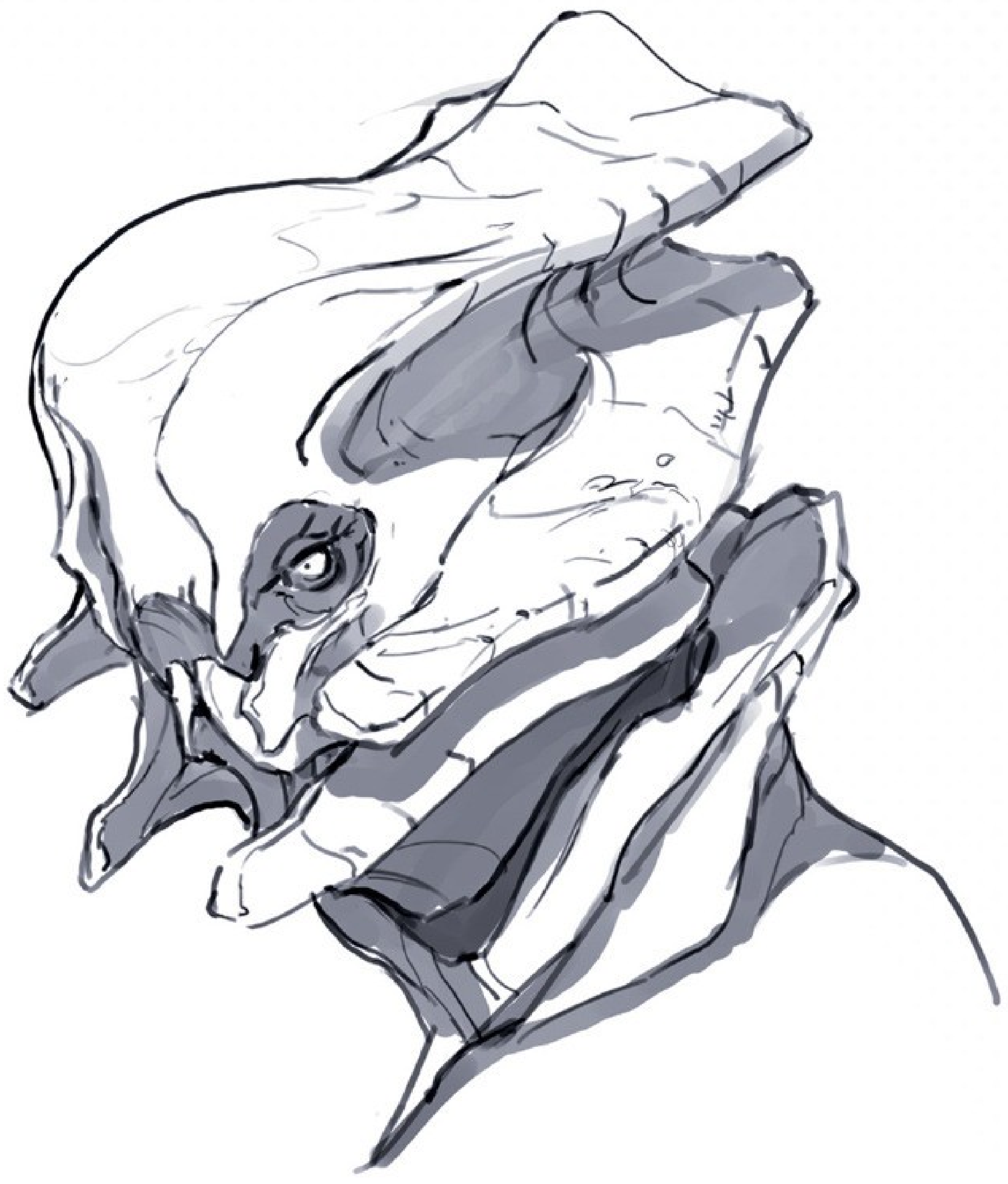
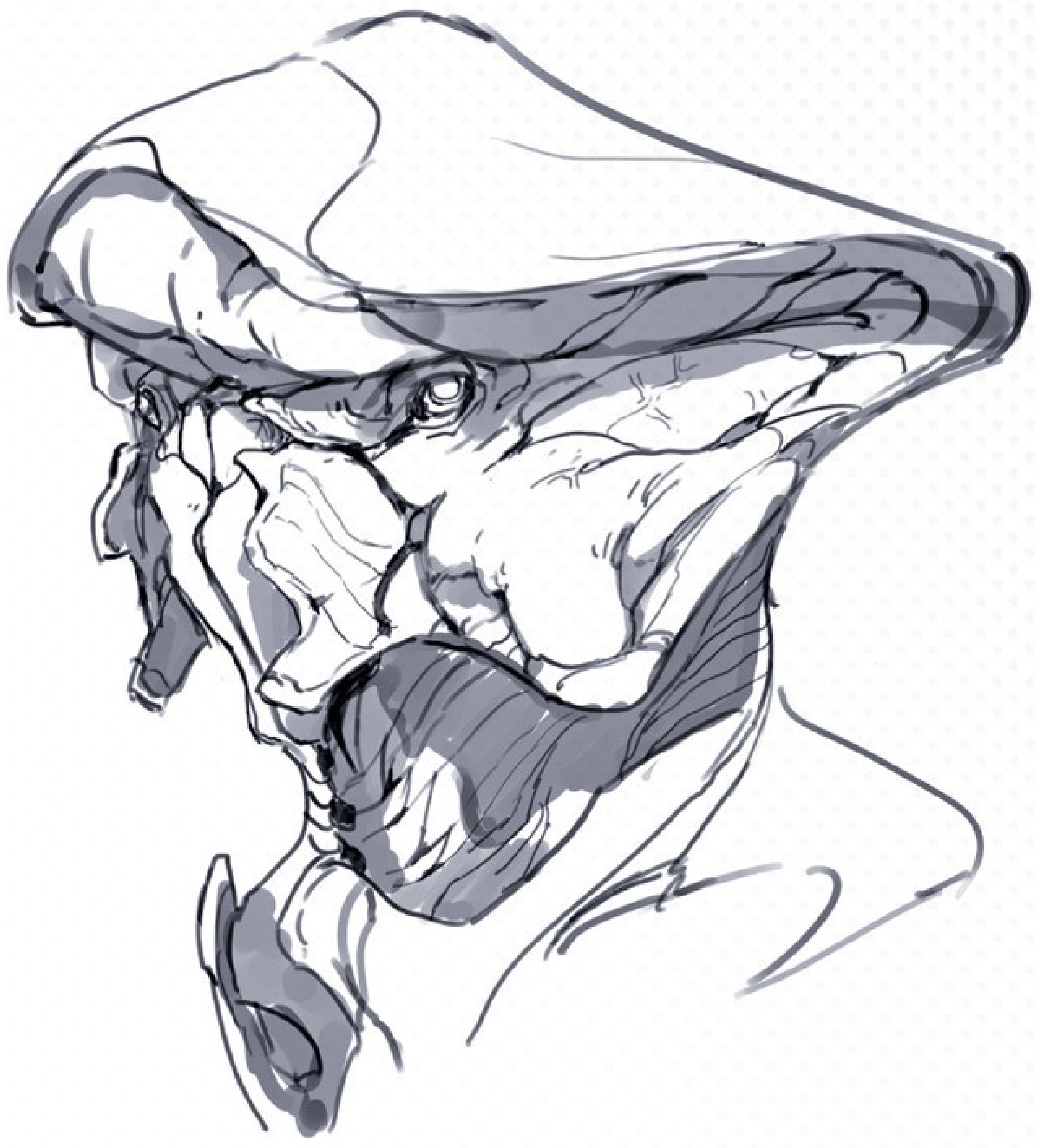
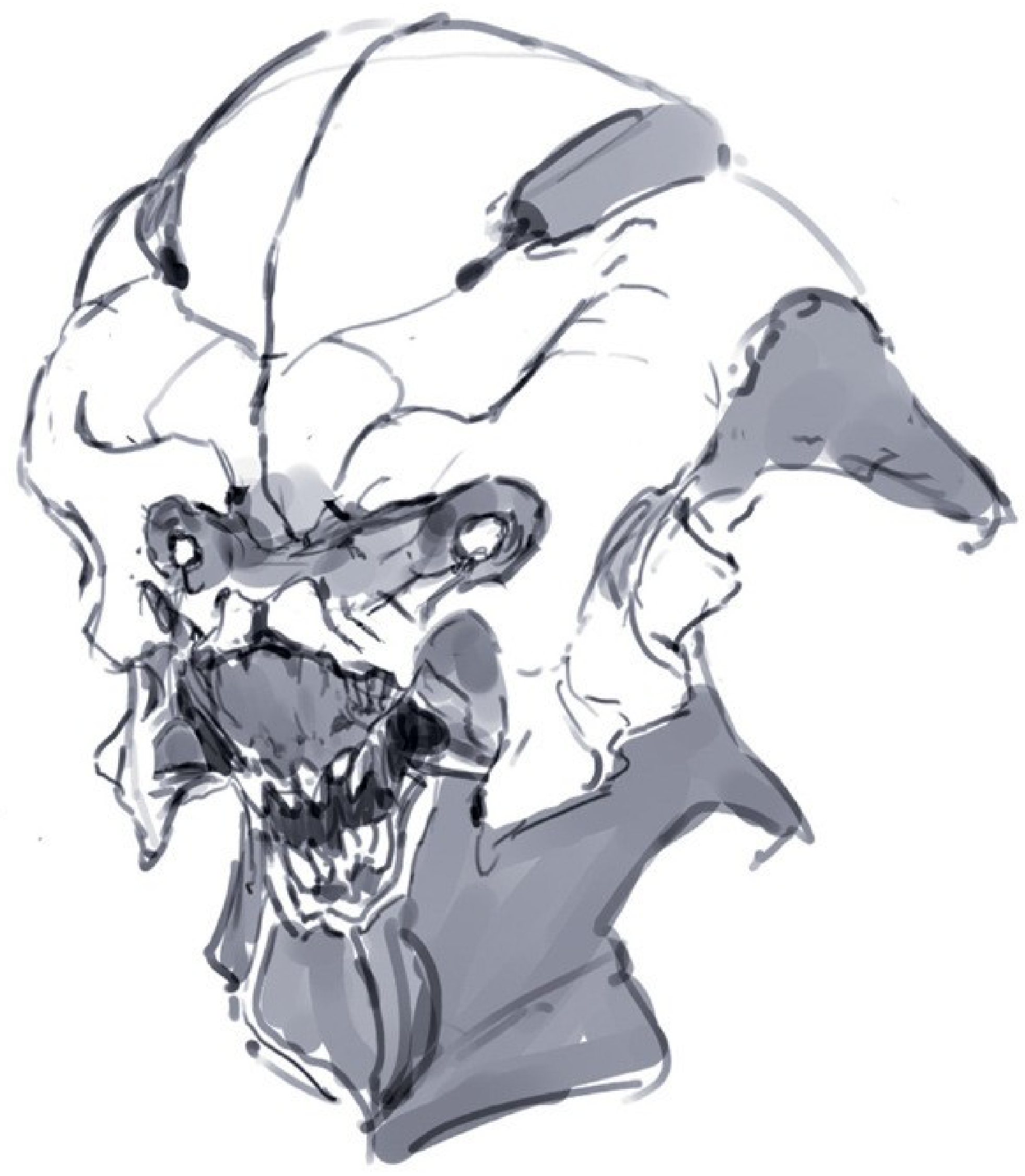
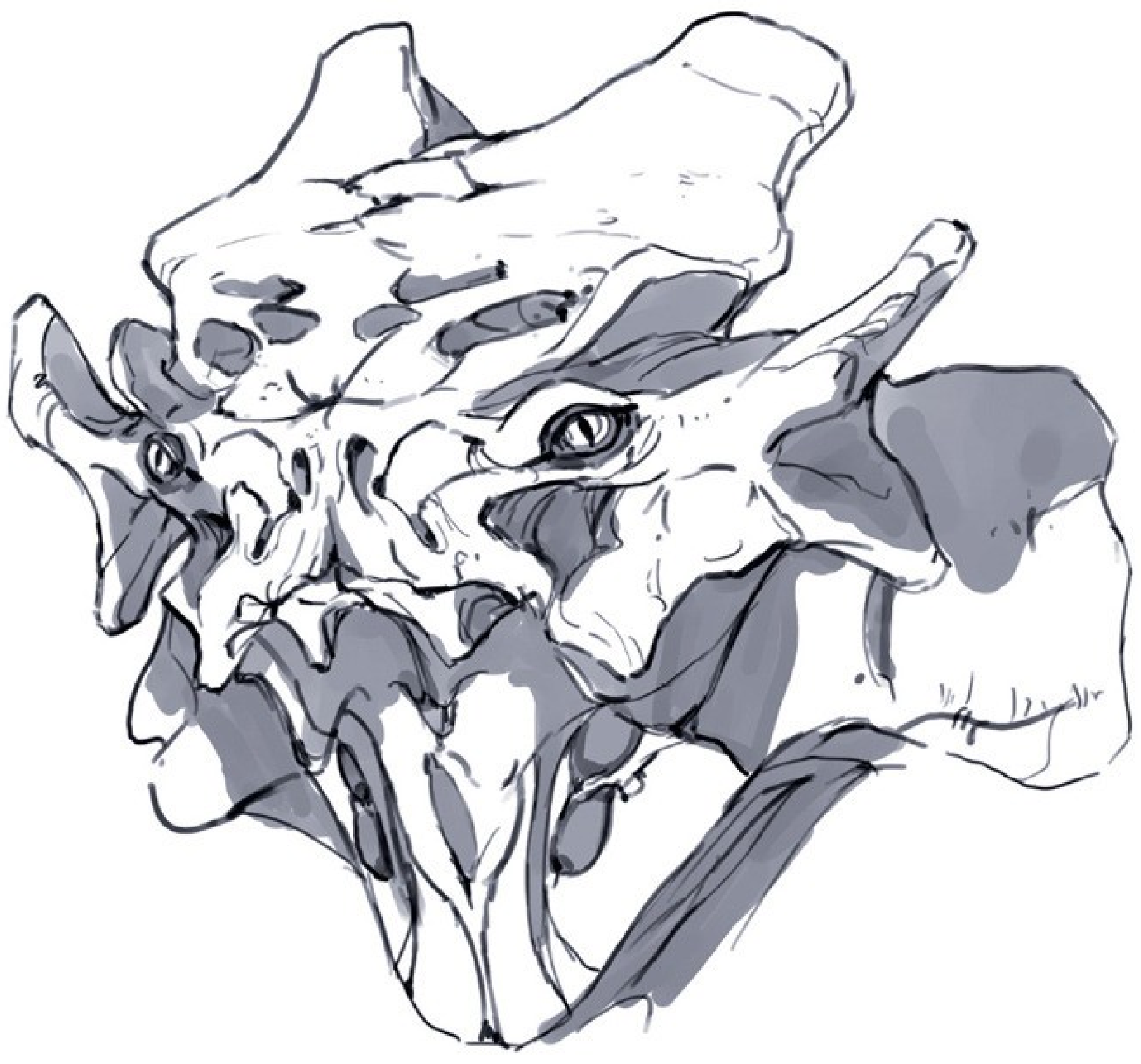
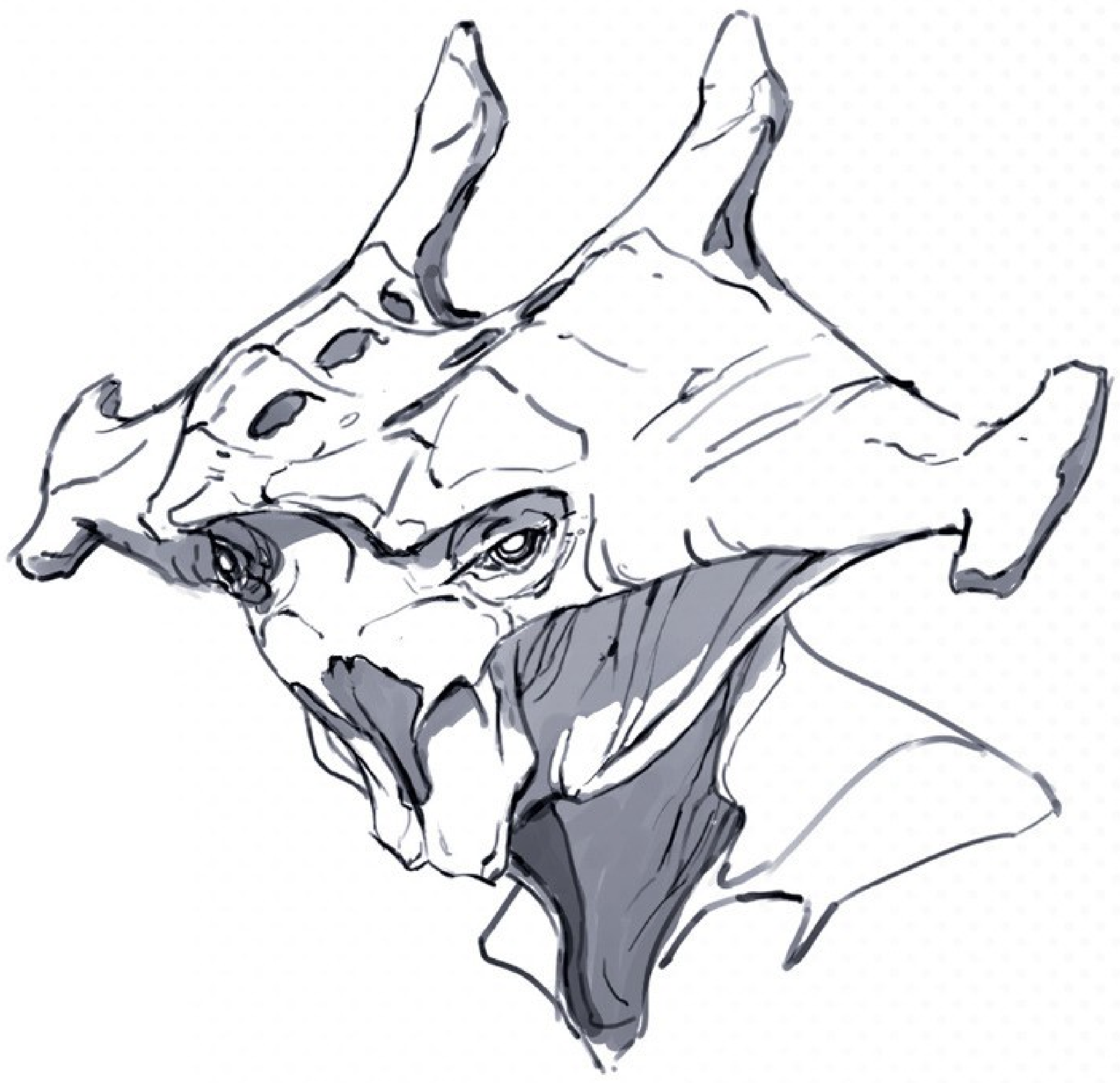
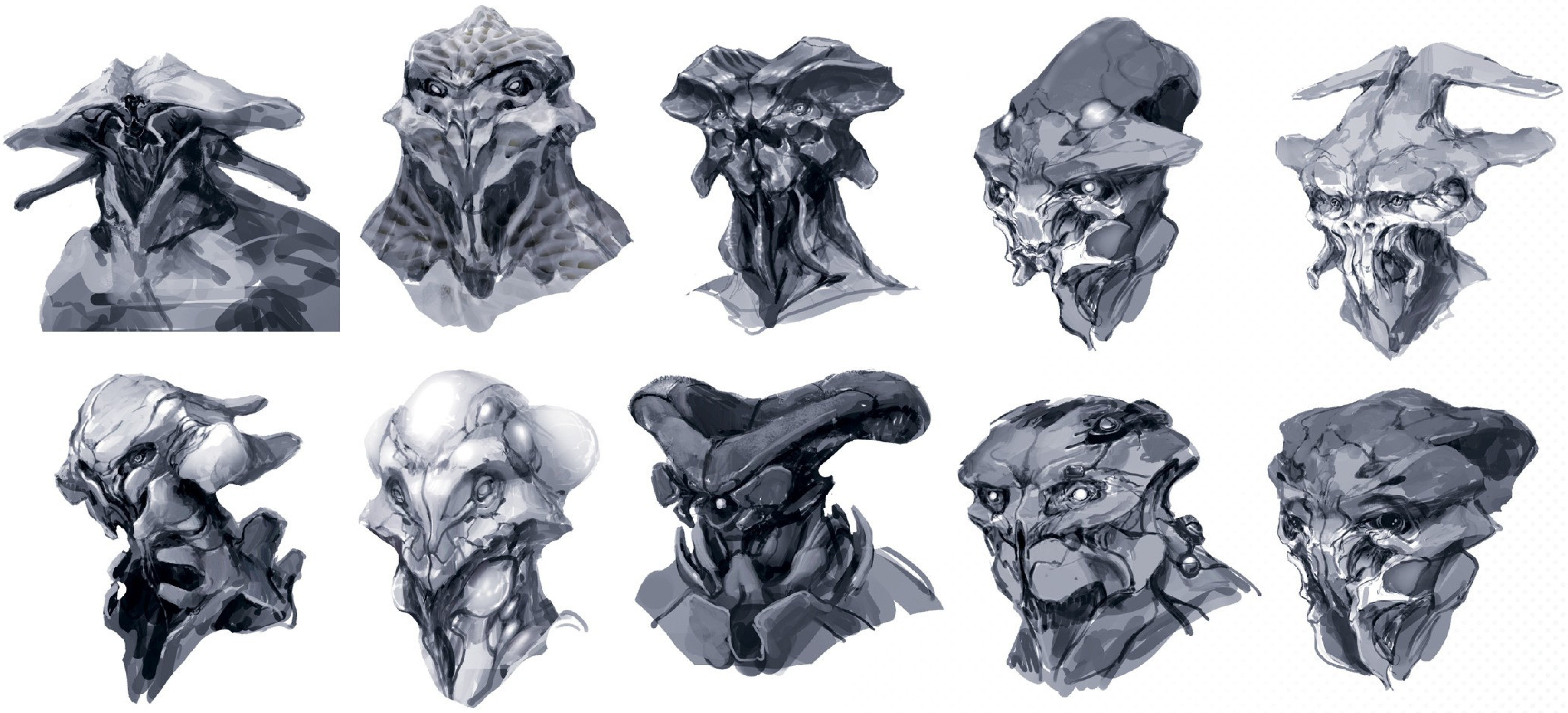
CK: With mysterious new worlds come mysterious new creatures and wildlife. Much time was spent exploring the types of fauna that would inhabit these worlds, the traits that would allow them to survive, and the emotional reactions they would elicit from visitors witnessing them for the first time.



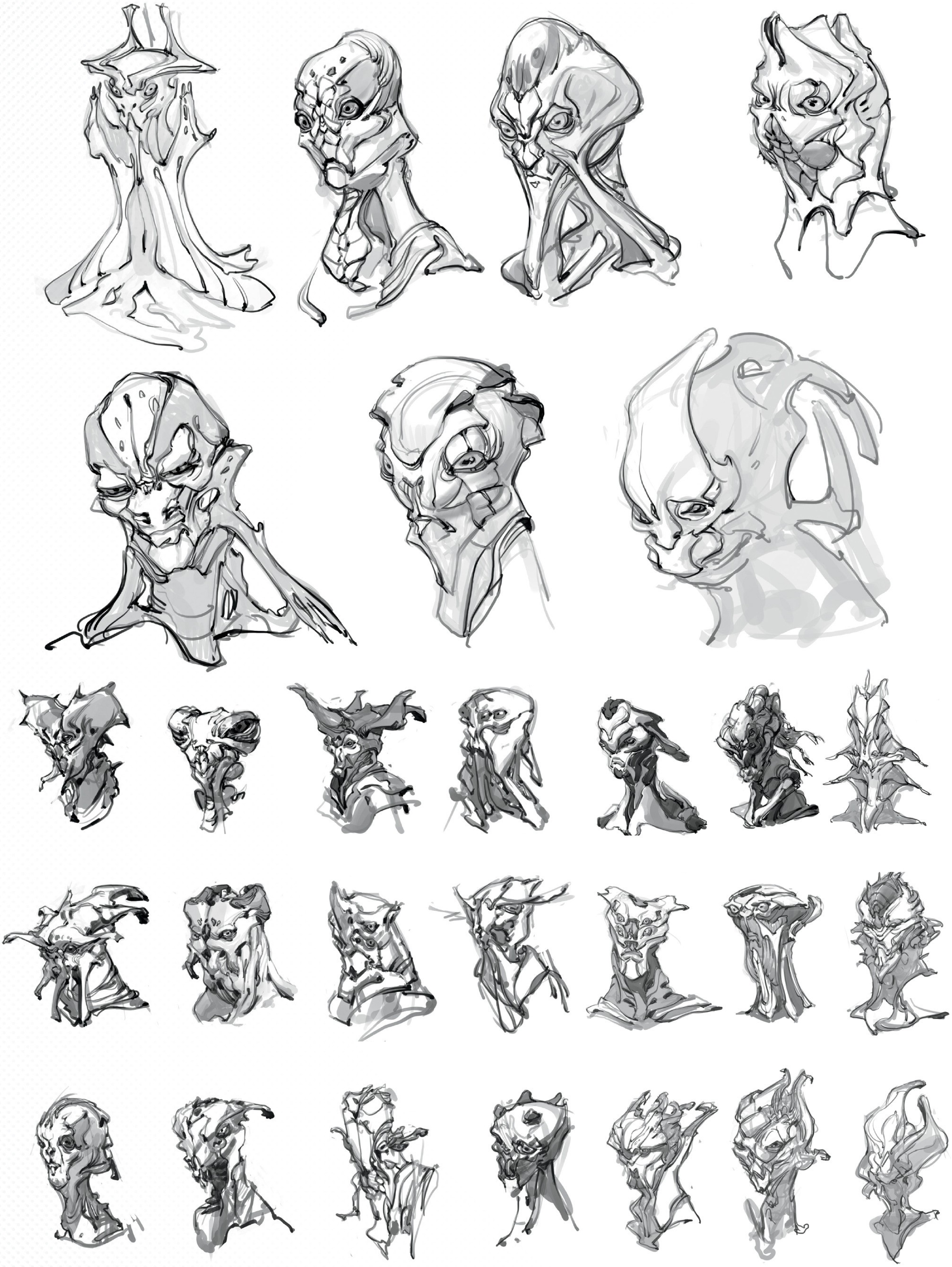


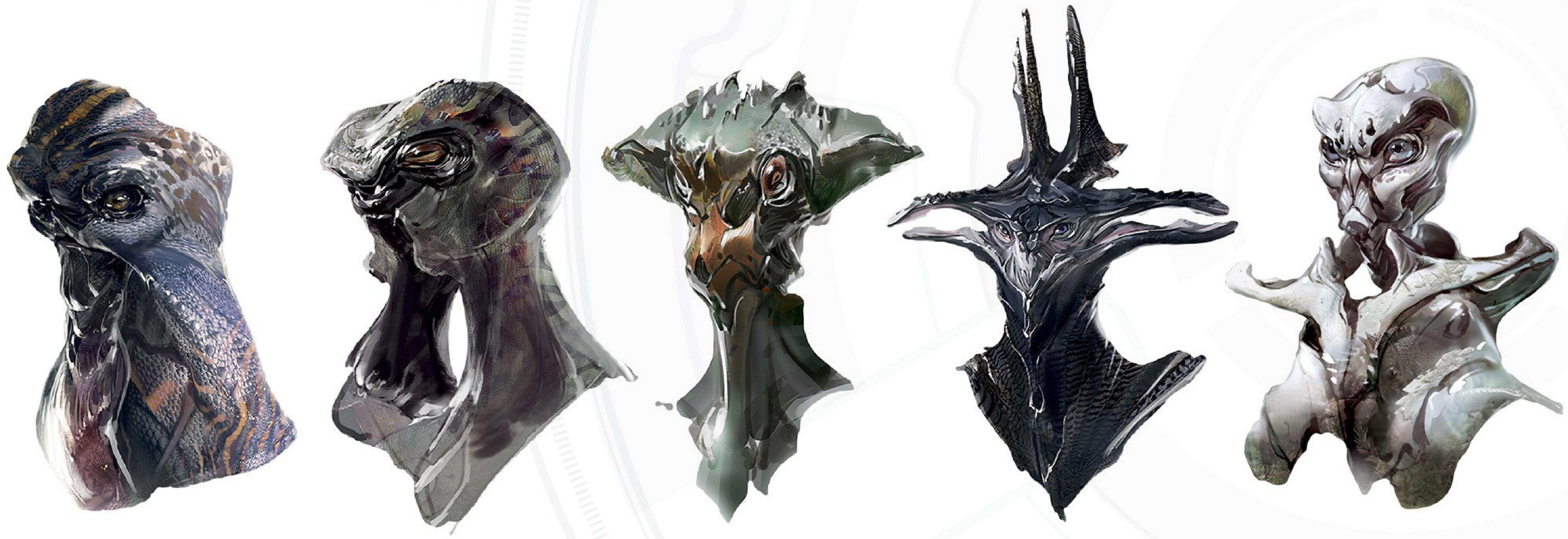


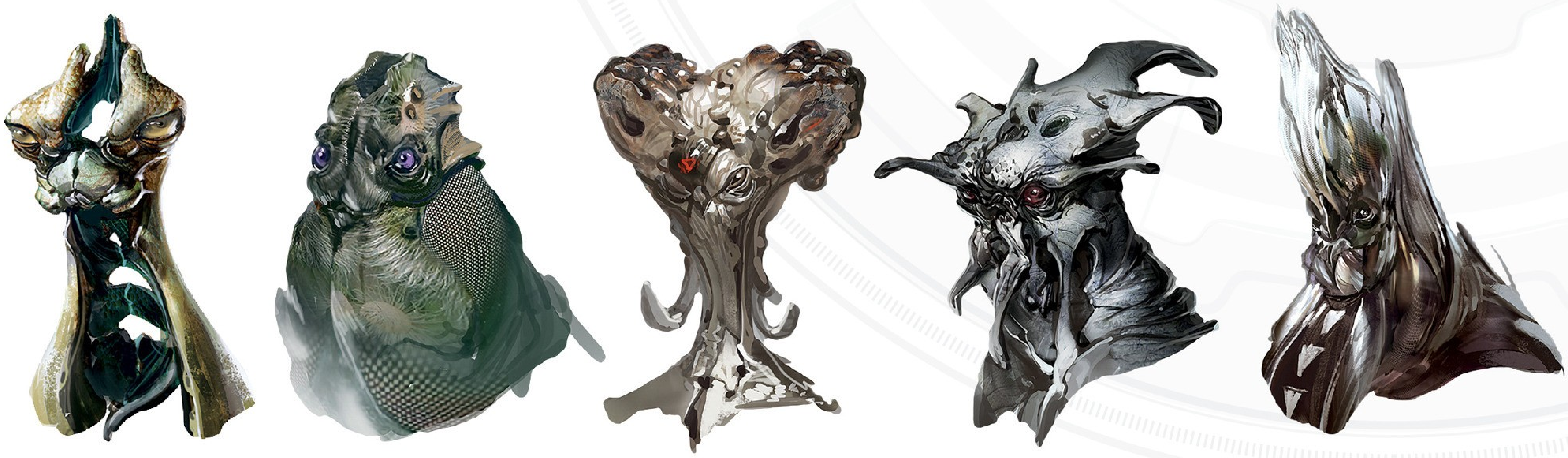
HL: These are early studies of the angara heads. It was fun, though challenging, to nail down a brand-new species that fit *Mass Effect* criteria.

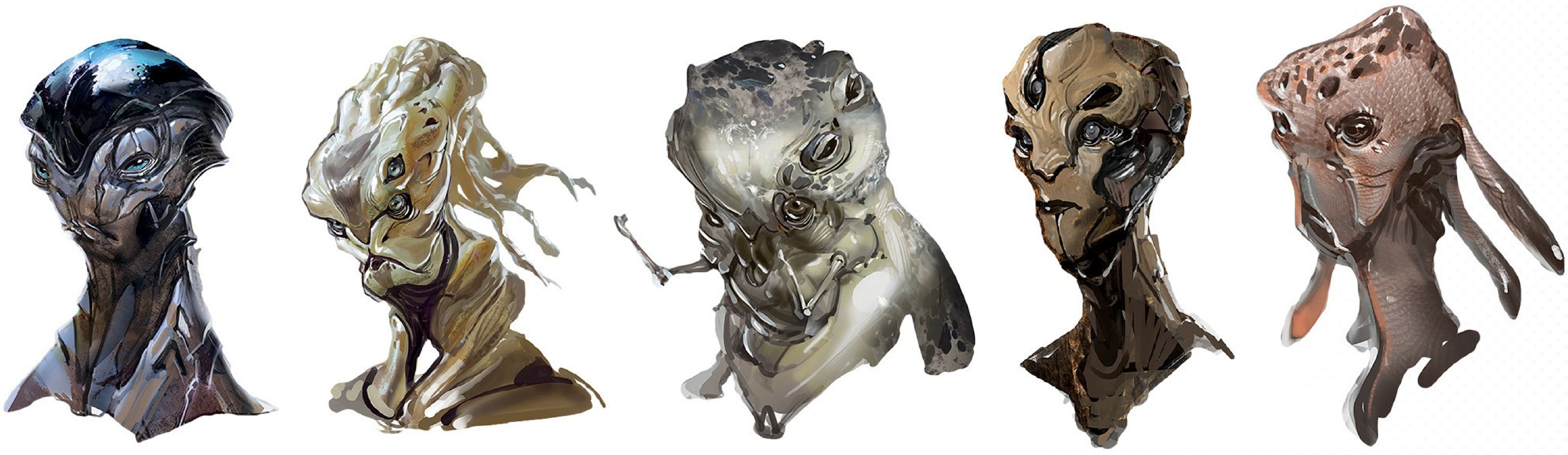








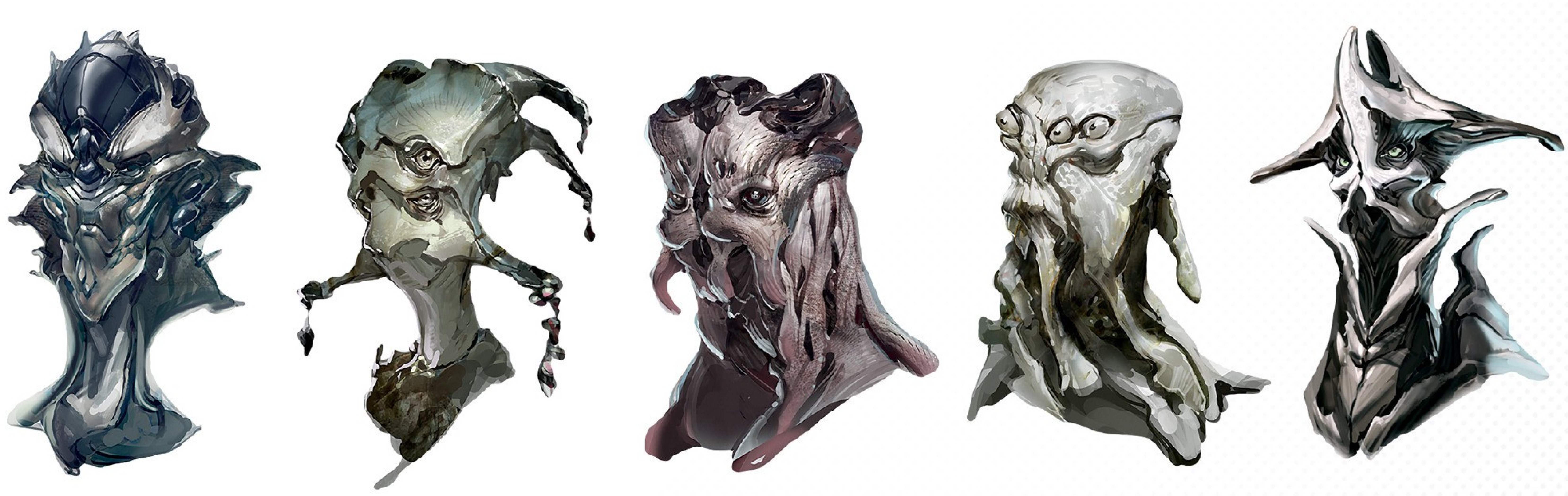
JM: These next few pages show some early explorations into what our nonplayer character aliens would be, some of which we used to develop both the kett and the angara.

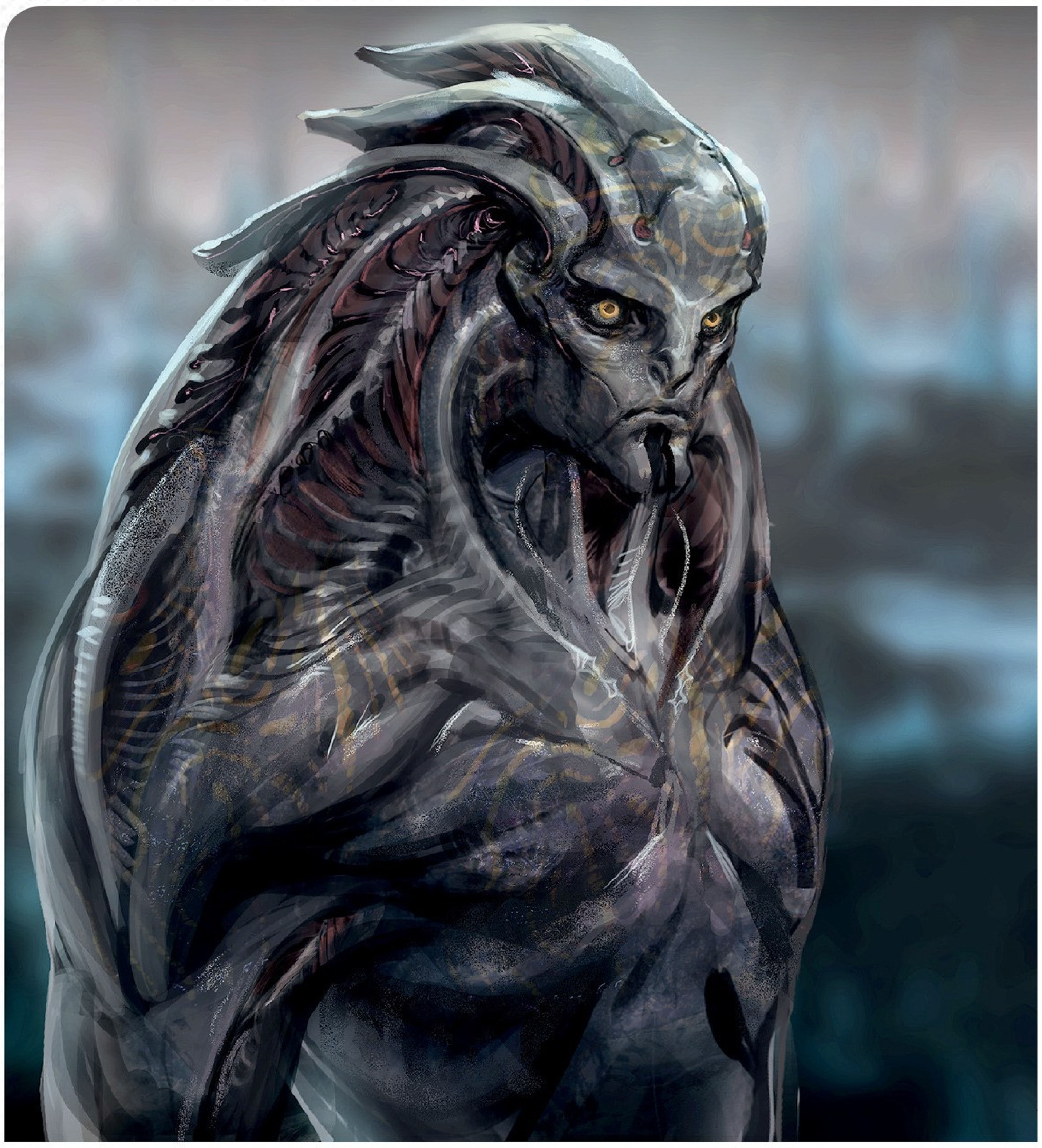


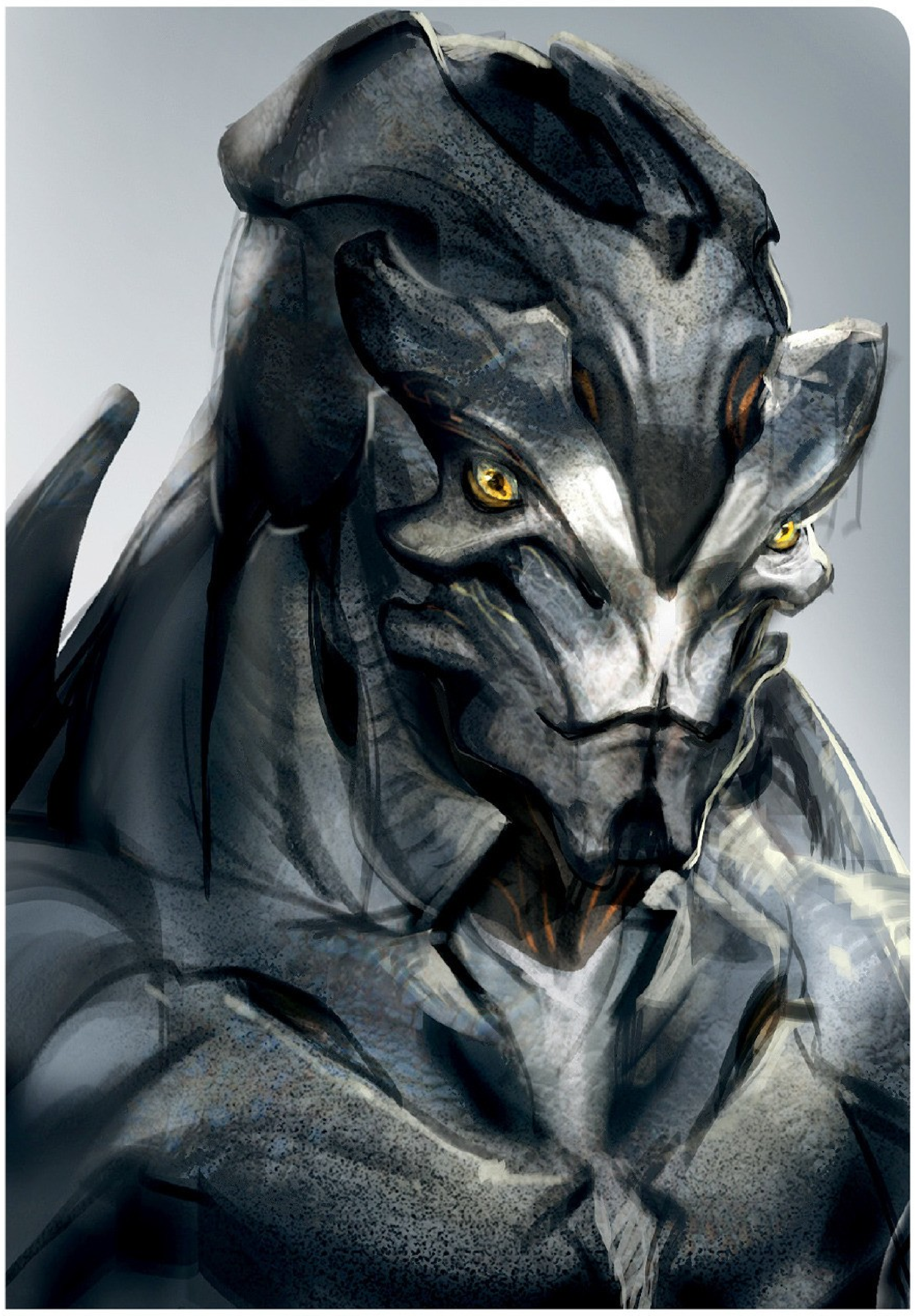


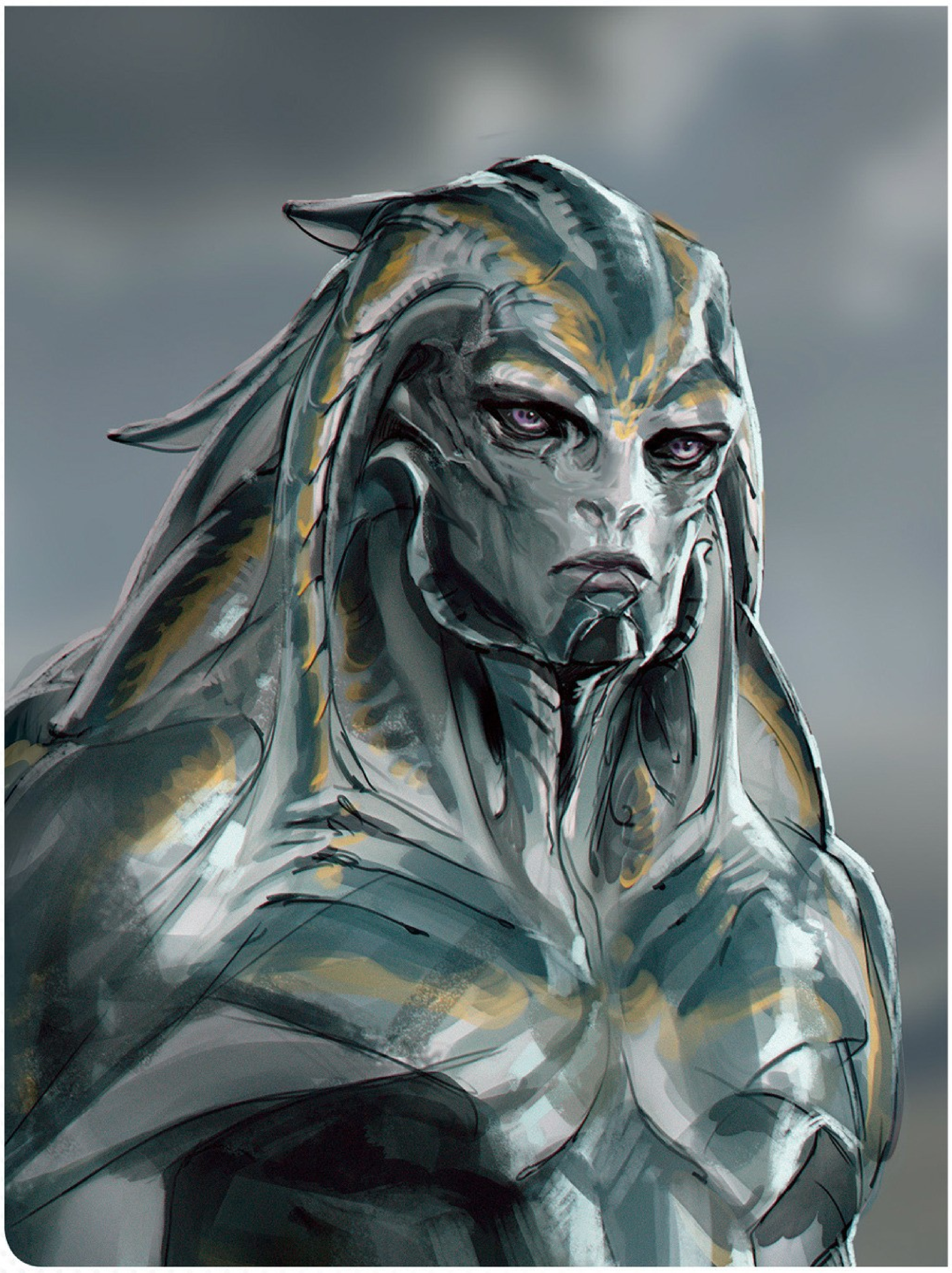


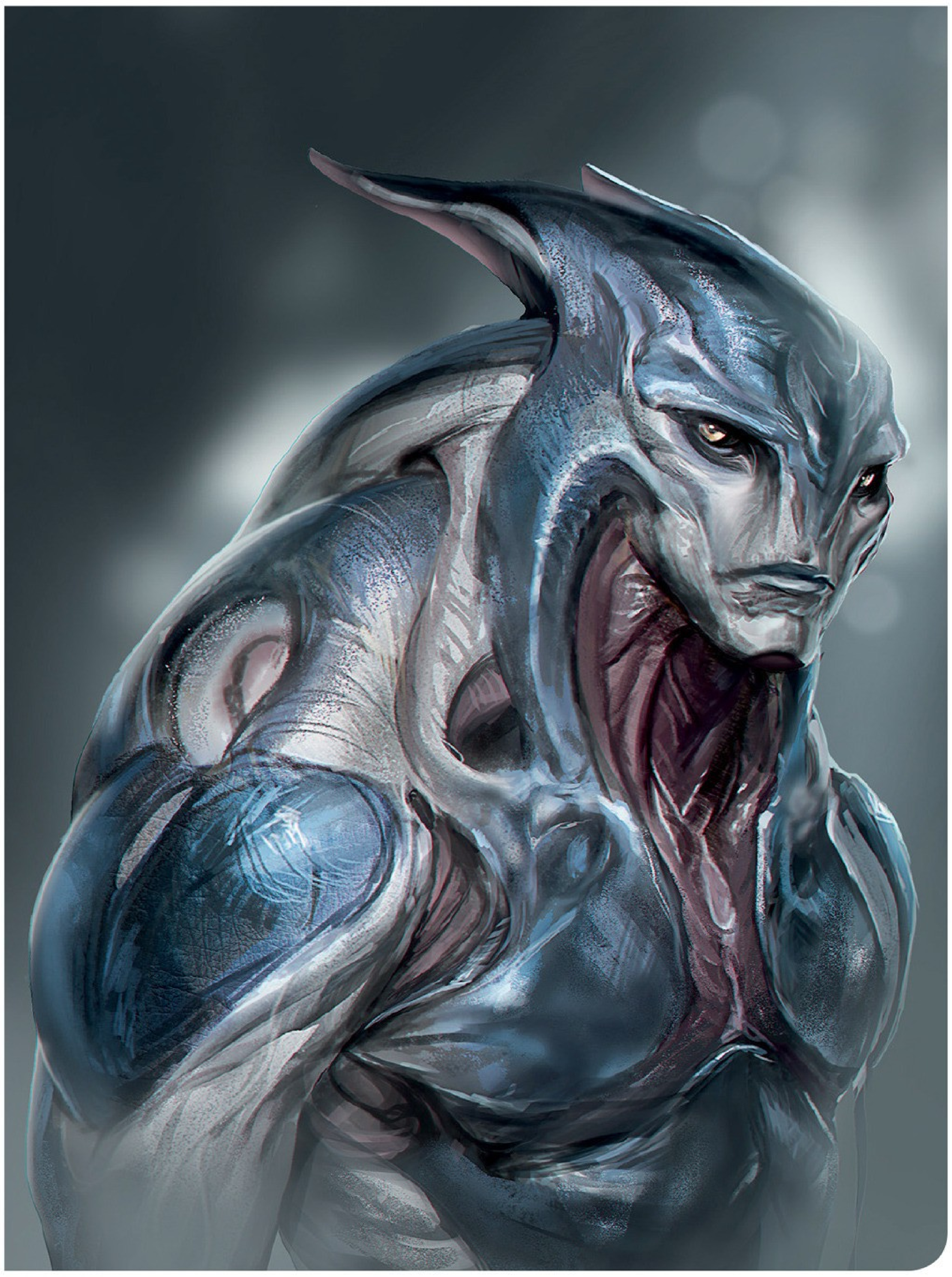


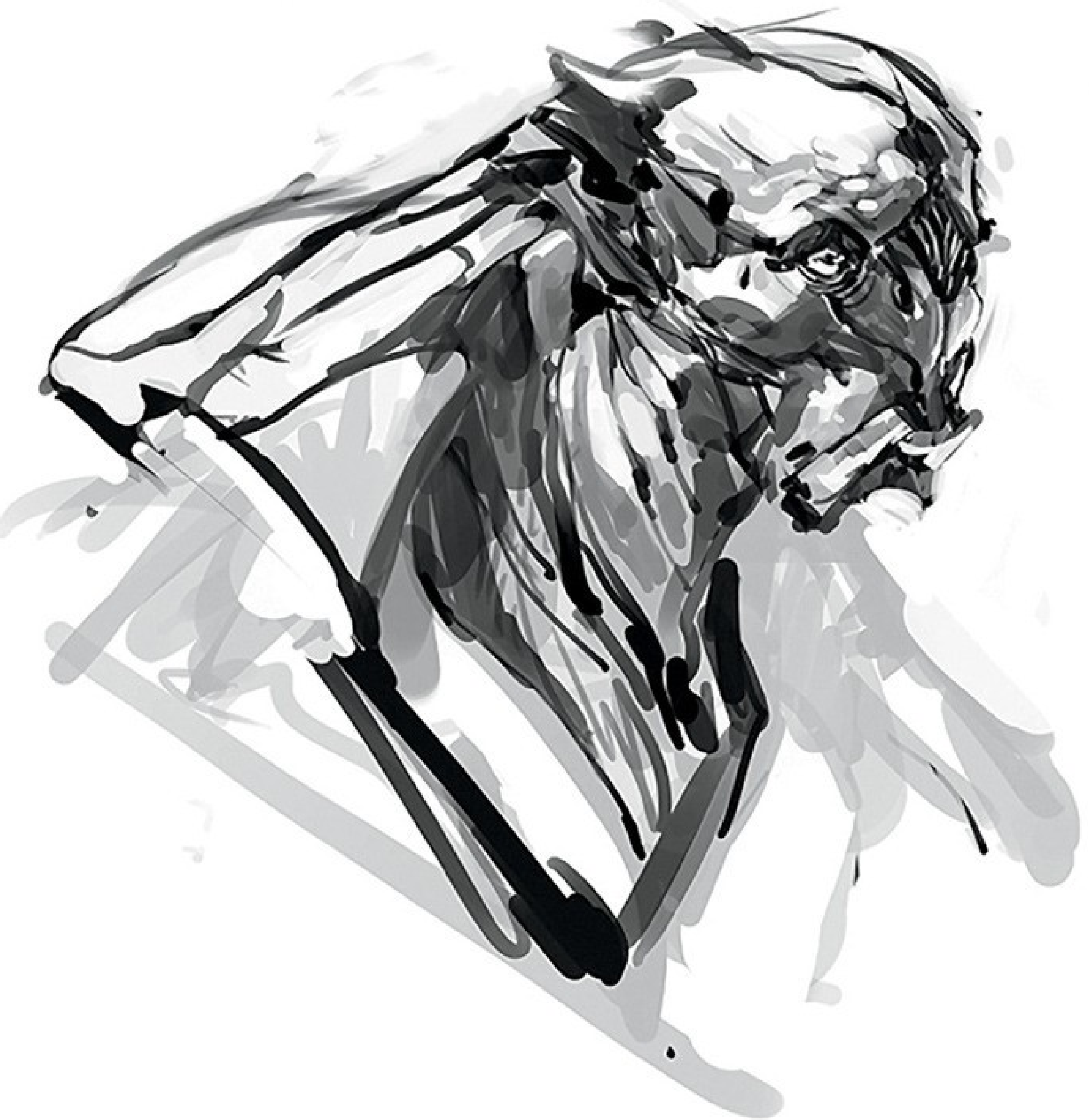


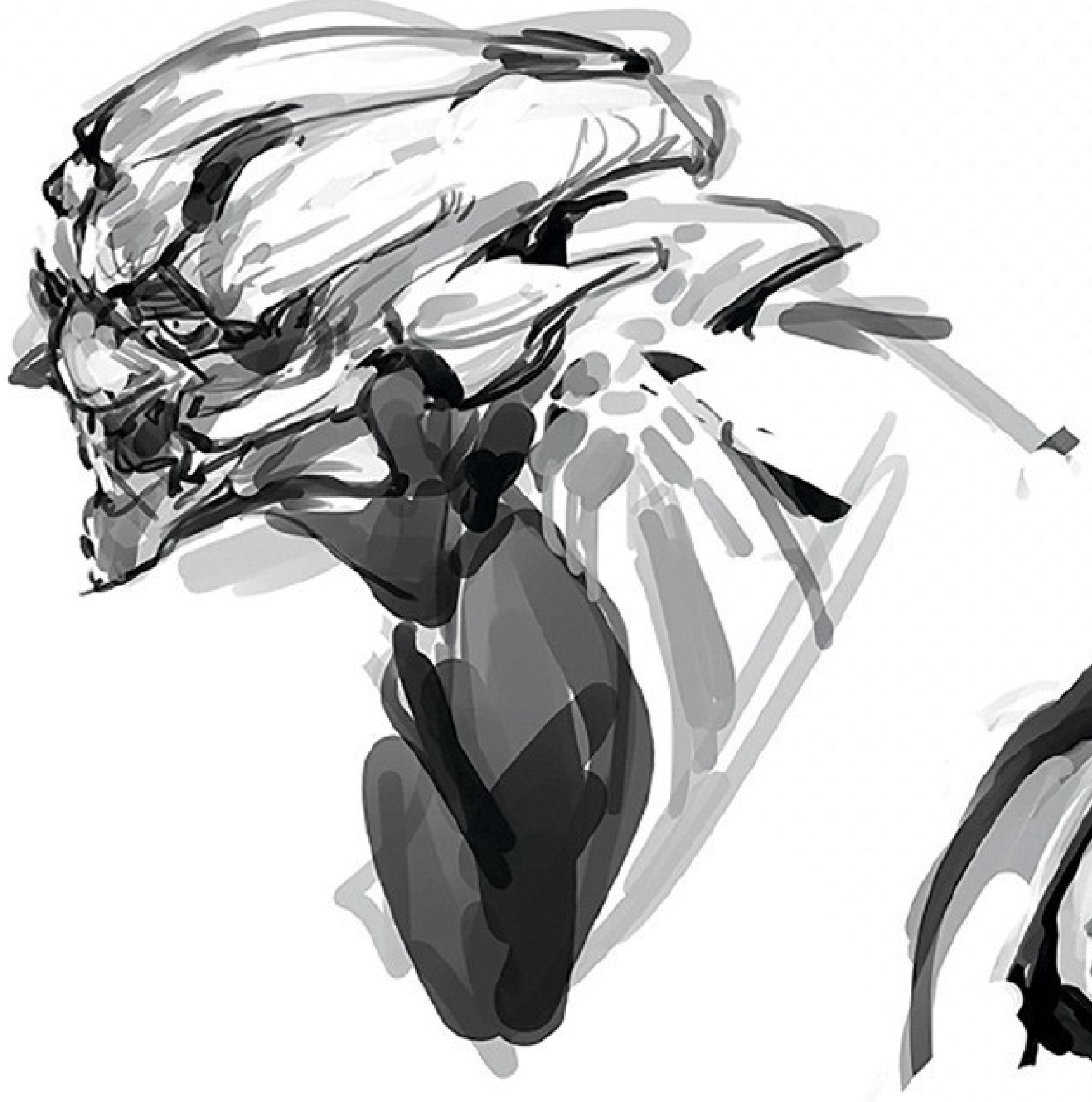


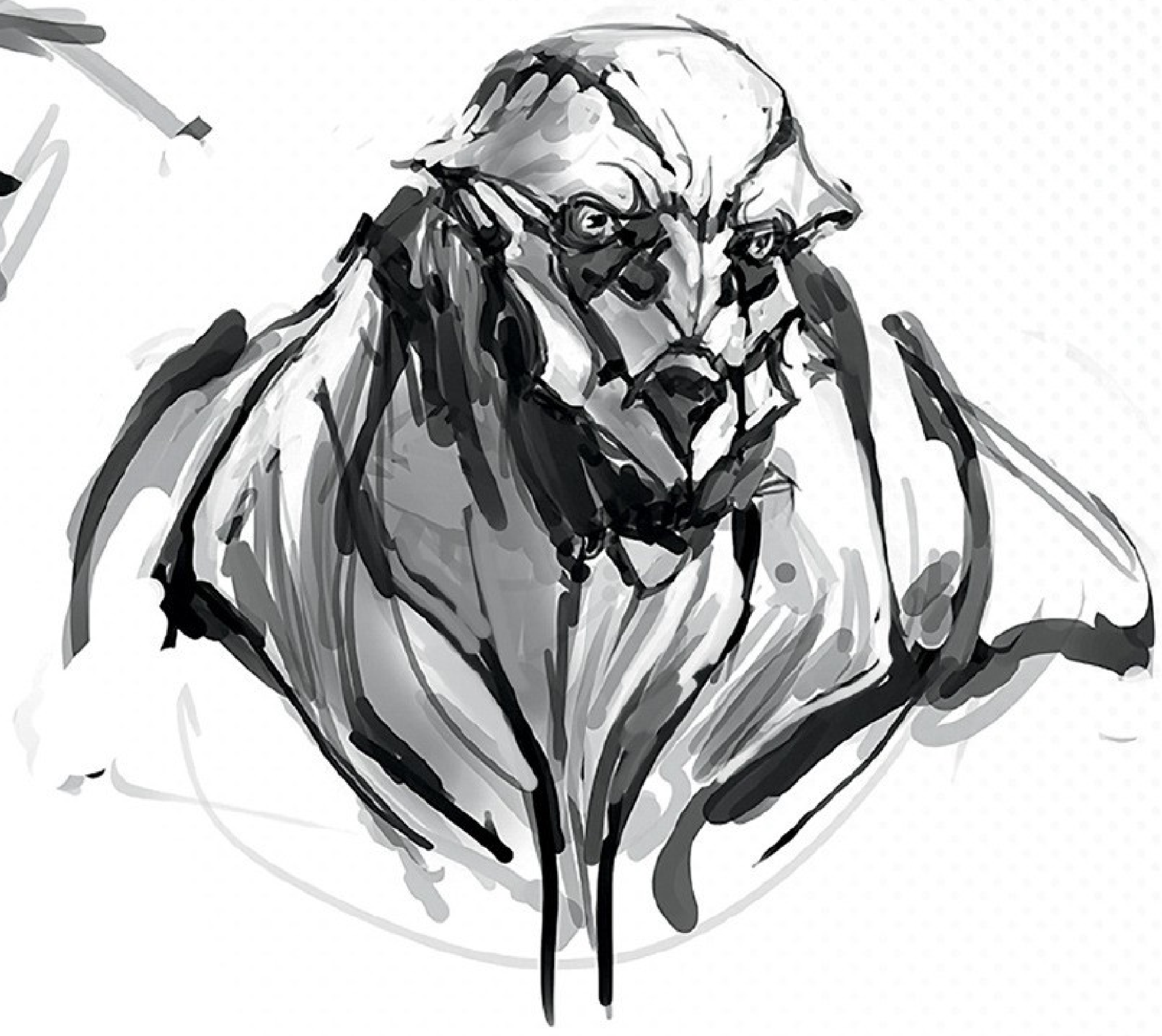


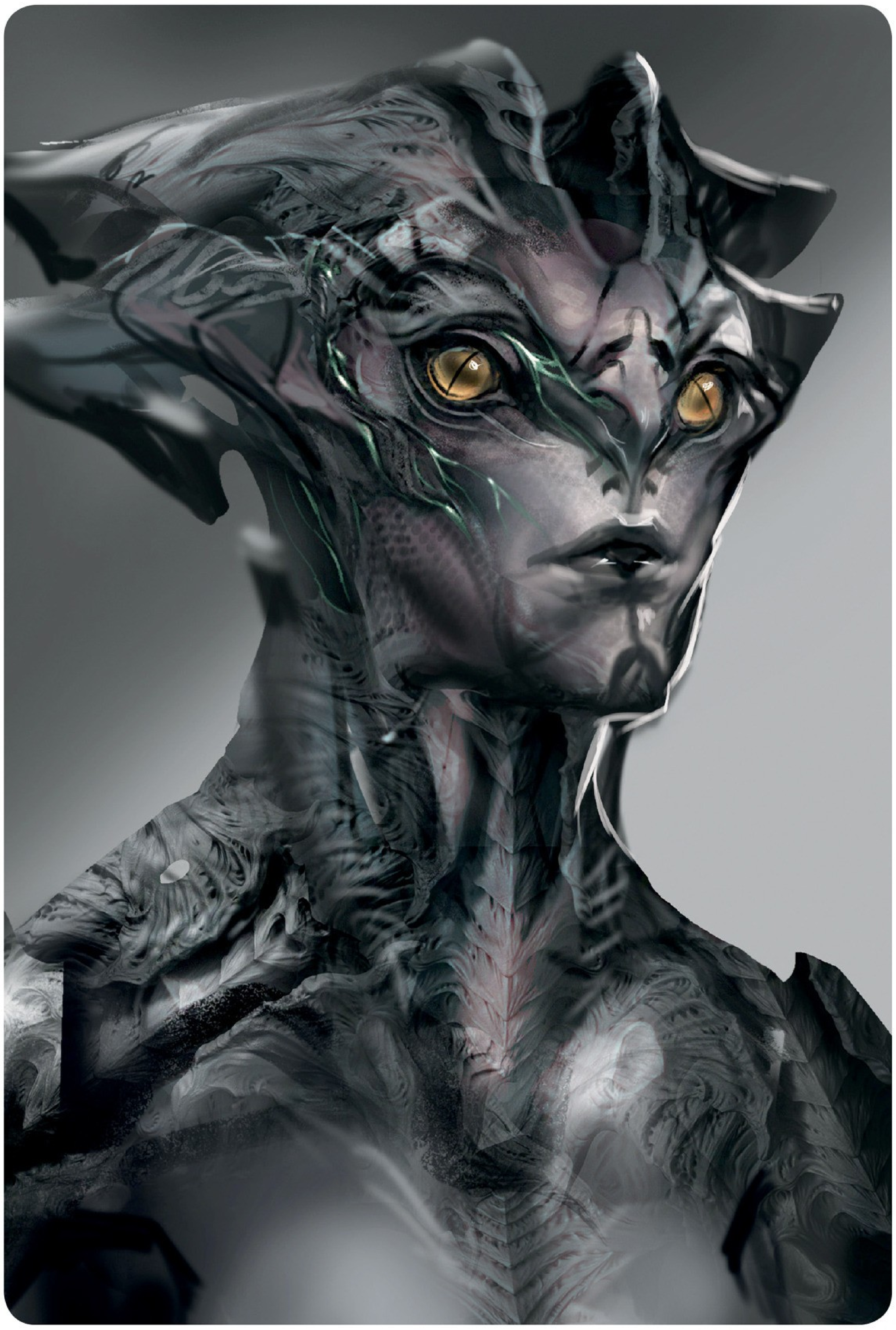


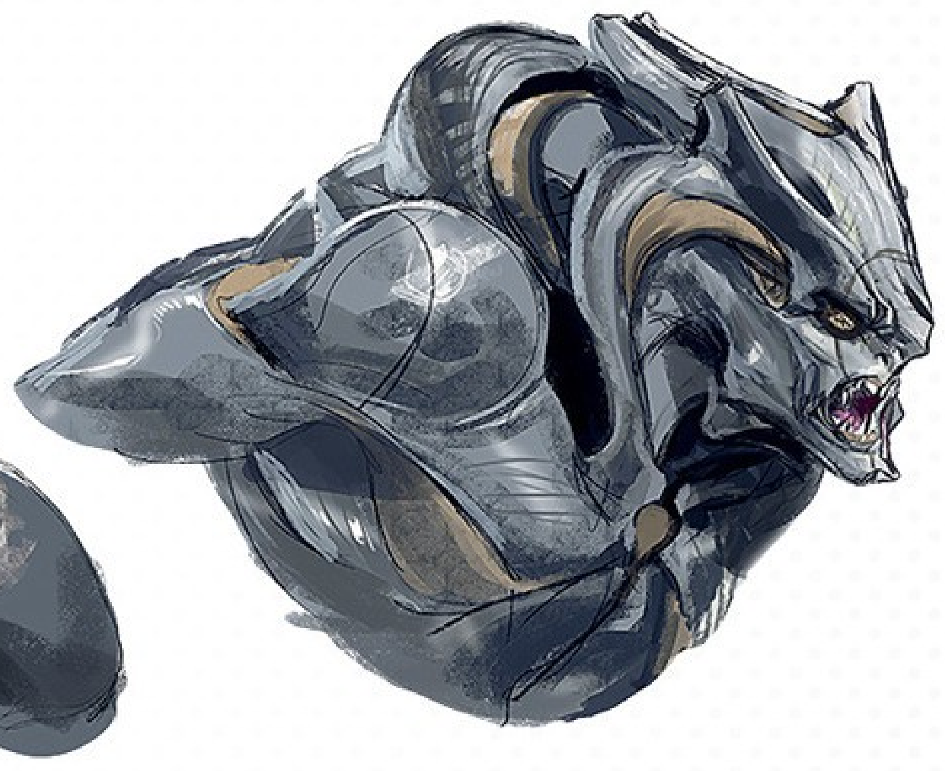


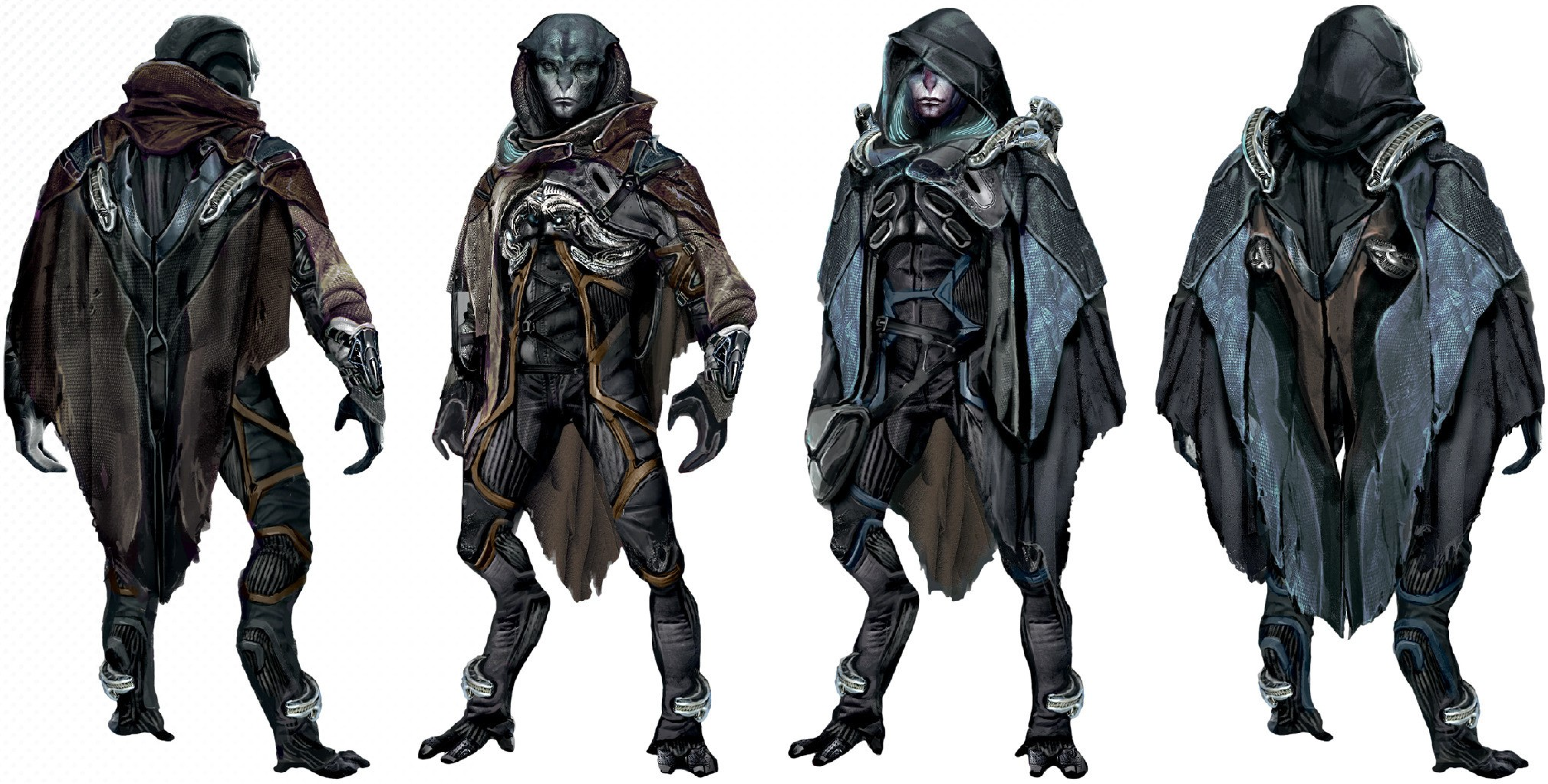


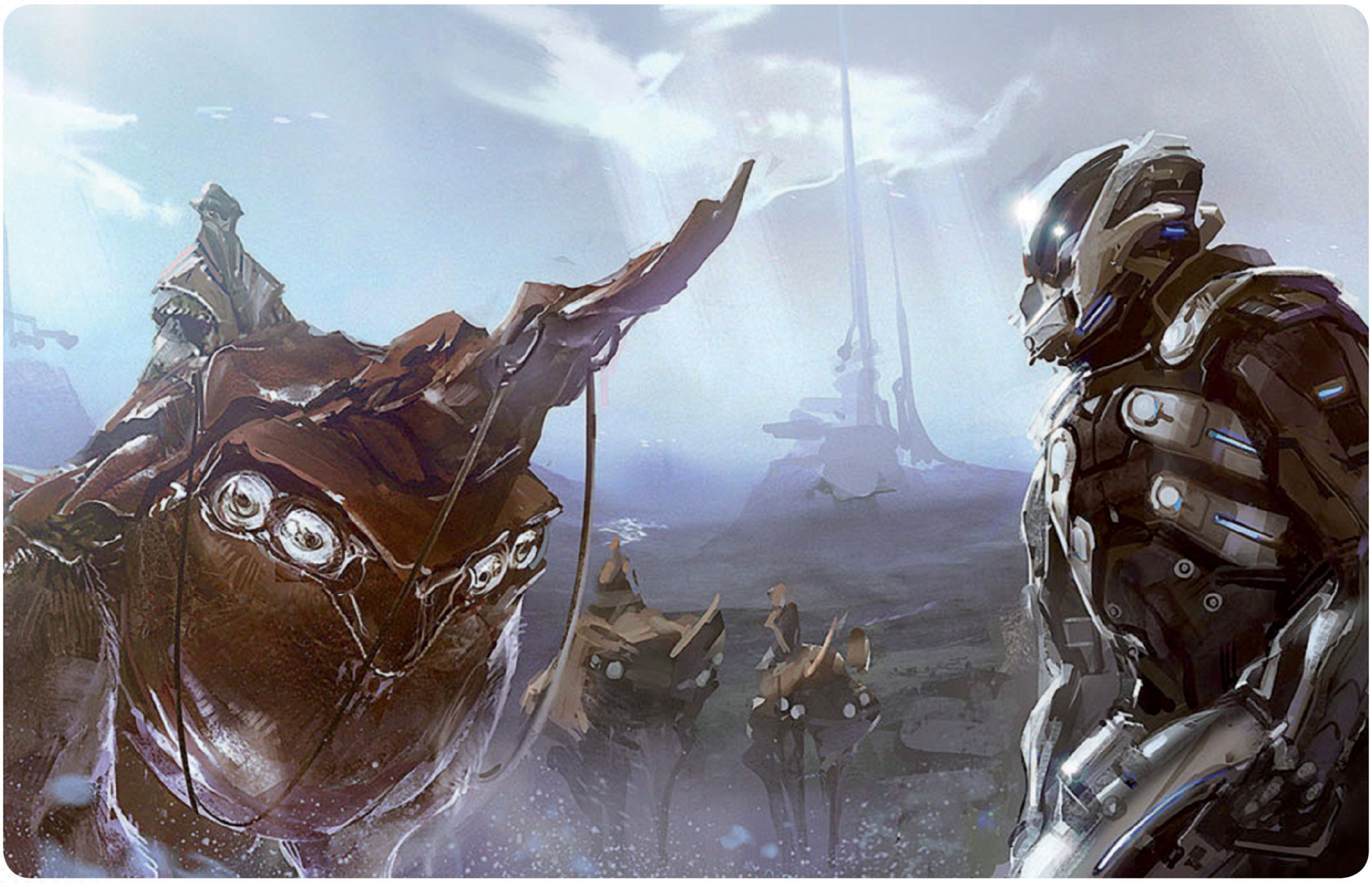






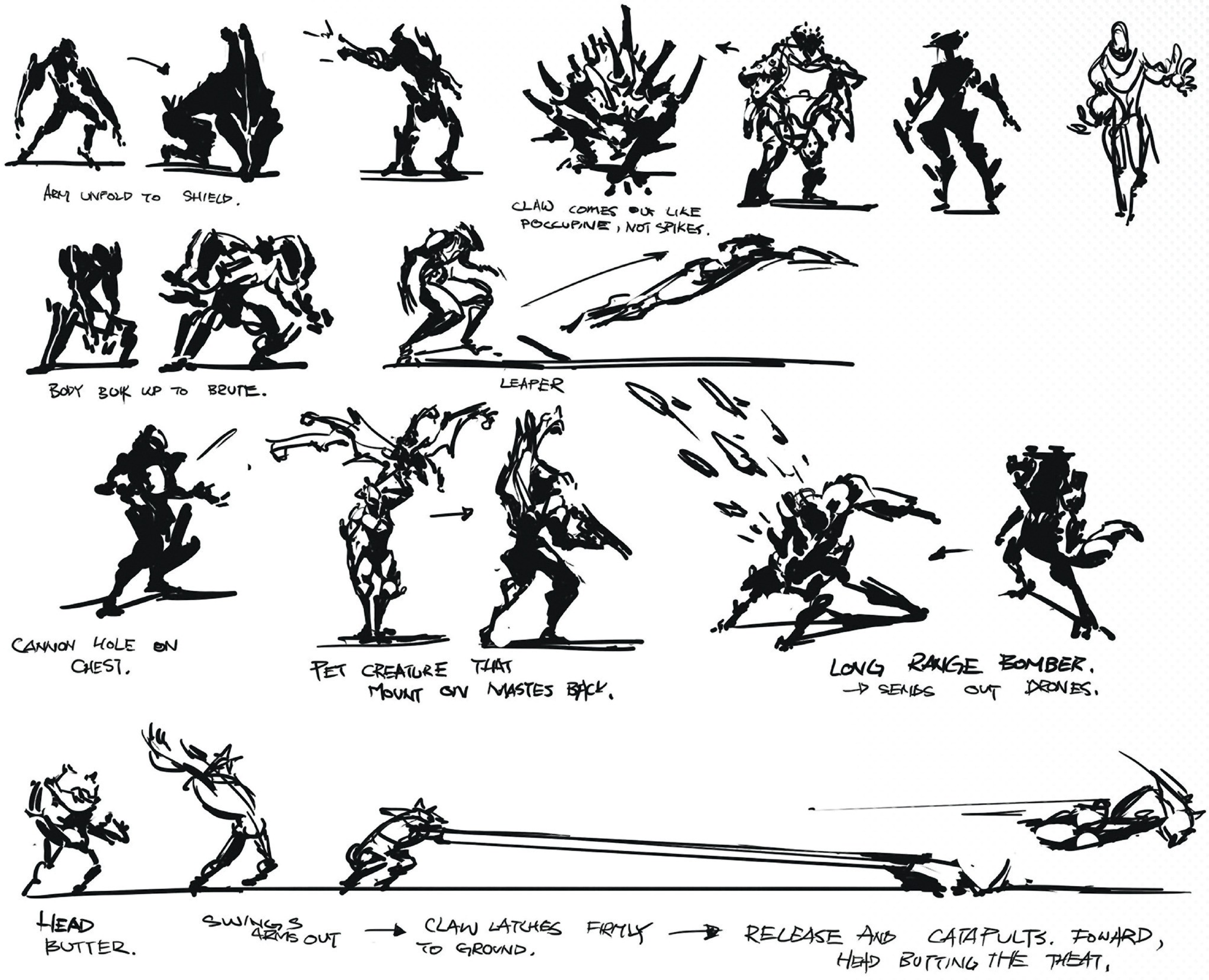


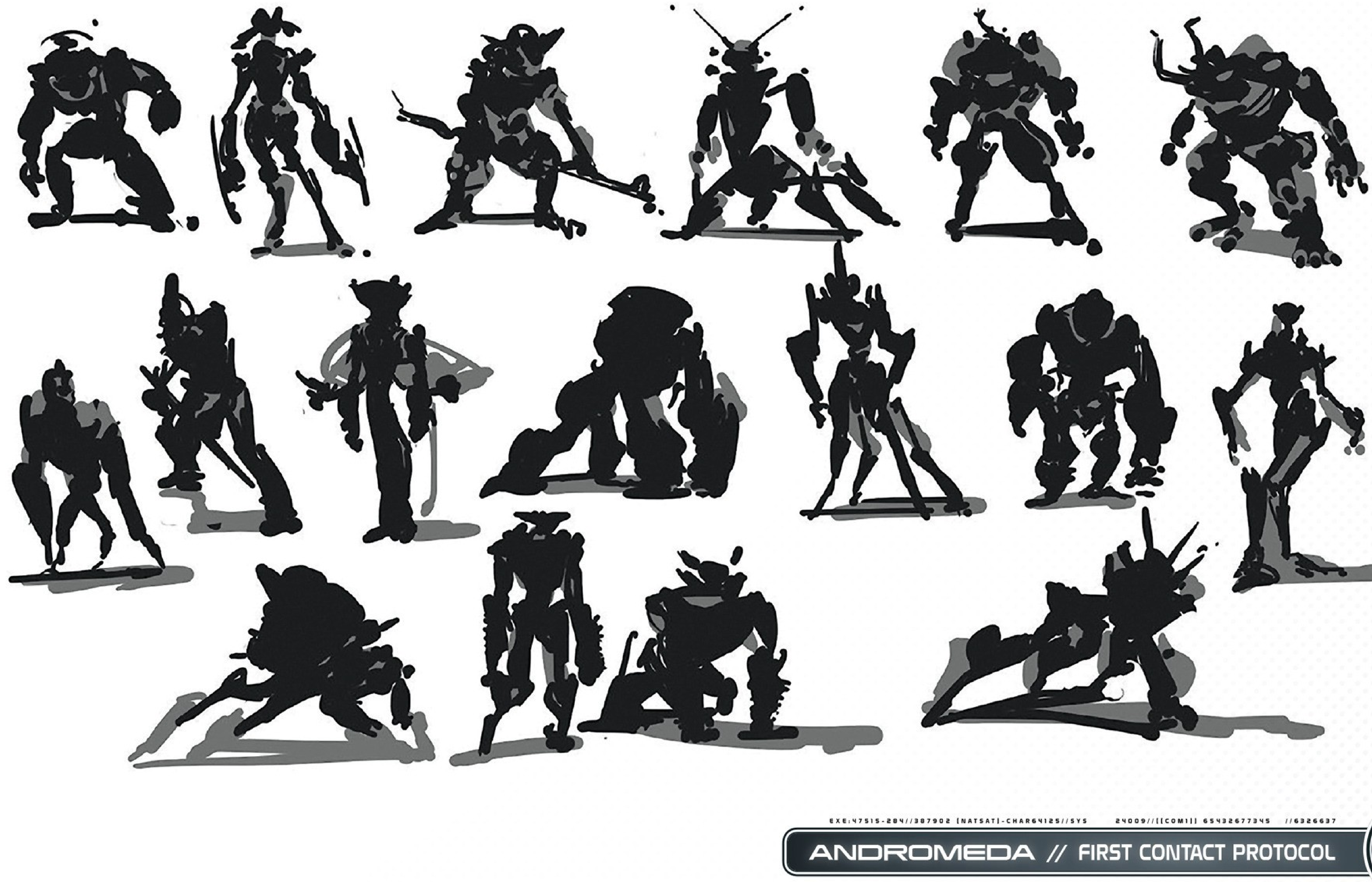


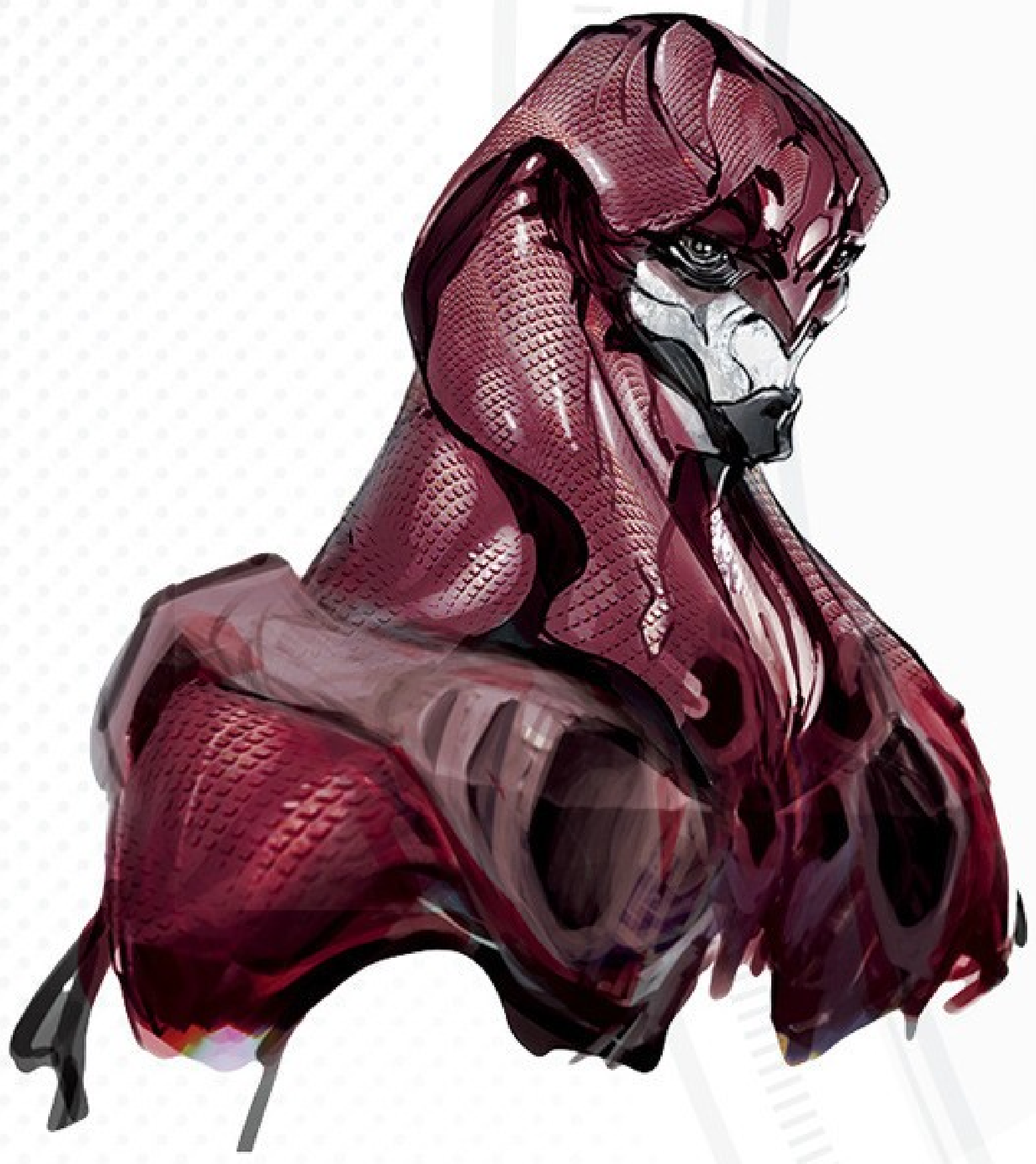


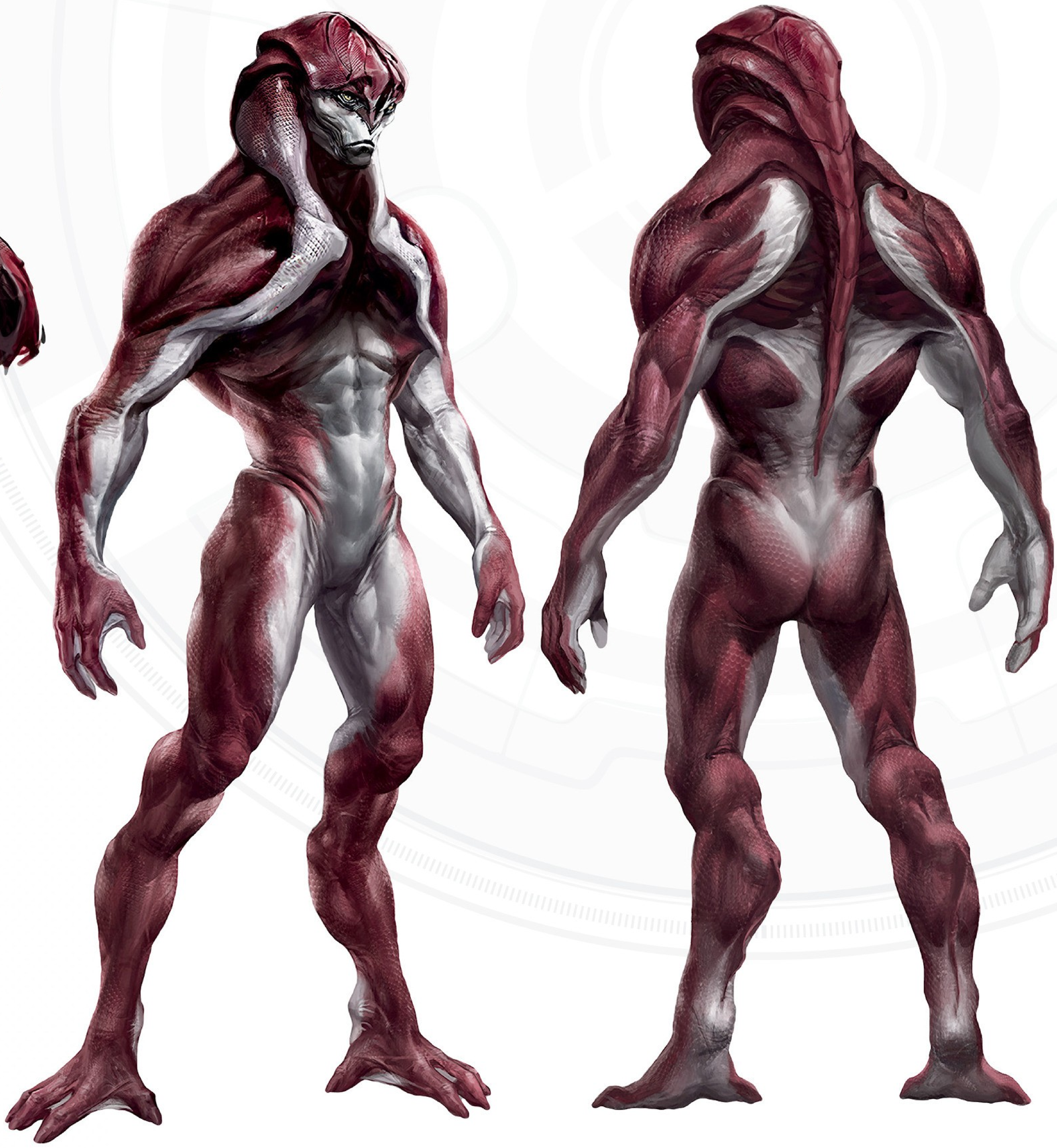
ANGARA

HL: The angara are one of the new sapient races we are introducing in *Mass Effect: Andromeda*. It was a challenge to create an alien species that is able to emote with the same clarity as the established species from the Milky Way Galaxy.


ARM UNFOLD TO SHIELD.
CLAW COMES OUT LIKE
POCCUPINE, NOT SPIKES.
BODY BULK UP TO BRUTE.
LEAPER
CANNON HOLE ON
CHEST.
PET CREATURE THAT
MOUNT ON MASTES BACK.
LONG RANGE BOMBER.
→ SENDS OUT DRONES.
HEAD
BUTTER.
SWINGS
ARMS OUT → CLAW LATCHES FIRMLY
TO GROUND. → RELEASE AND CATAPULTS. FOWARD,
HEAD BUTTING THE THEAT,

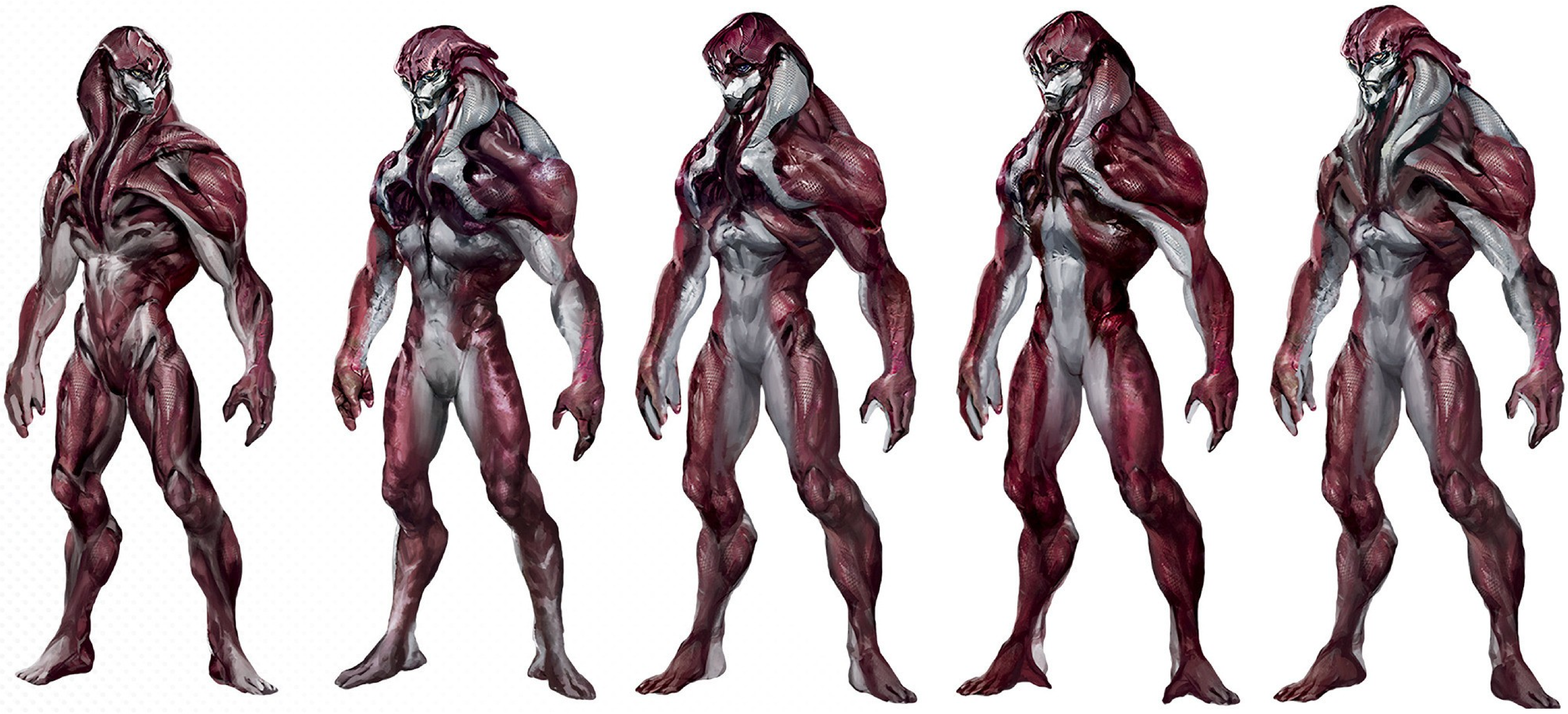


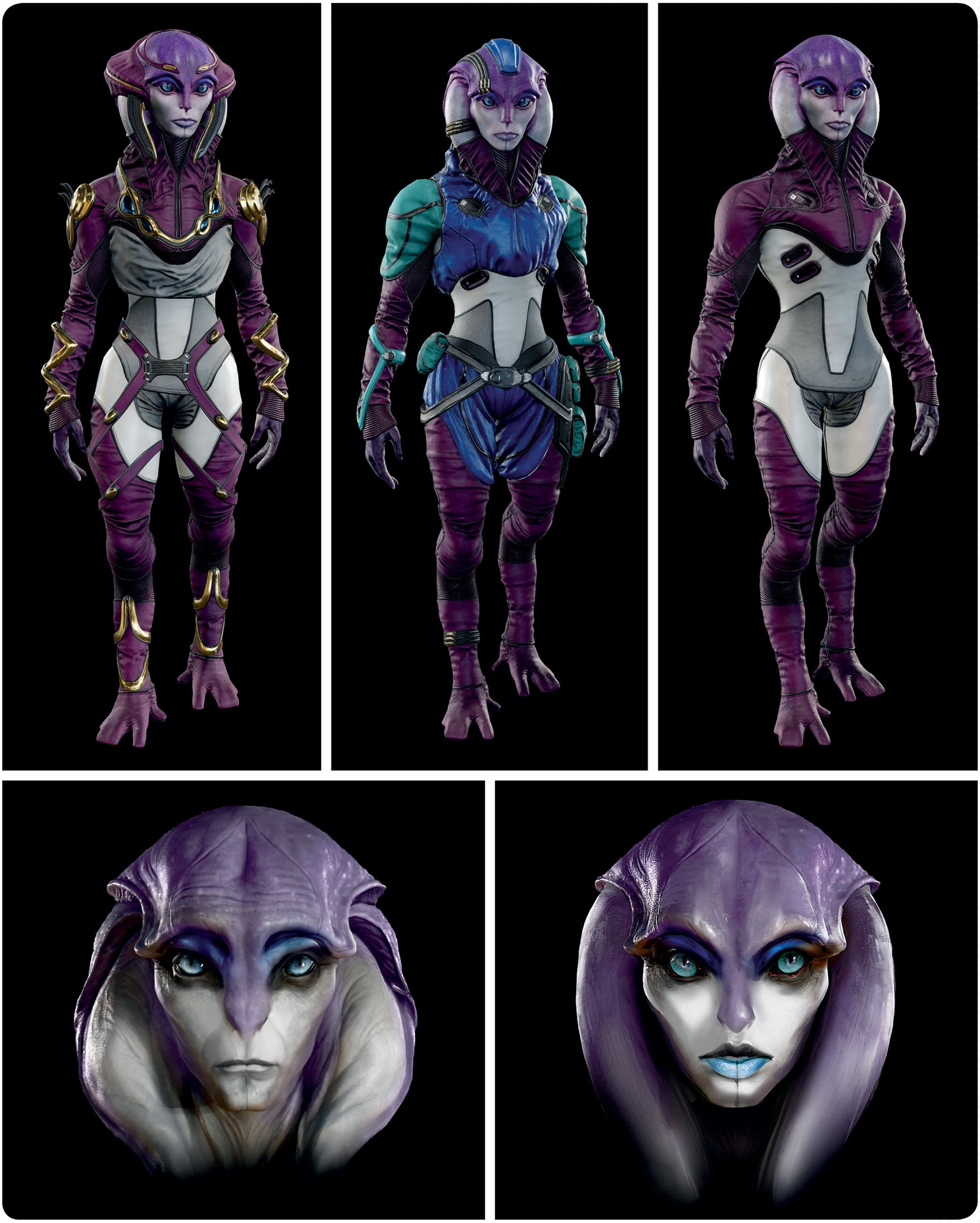




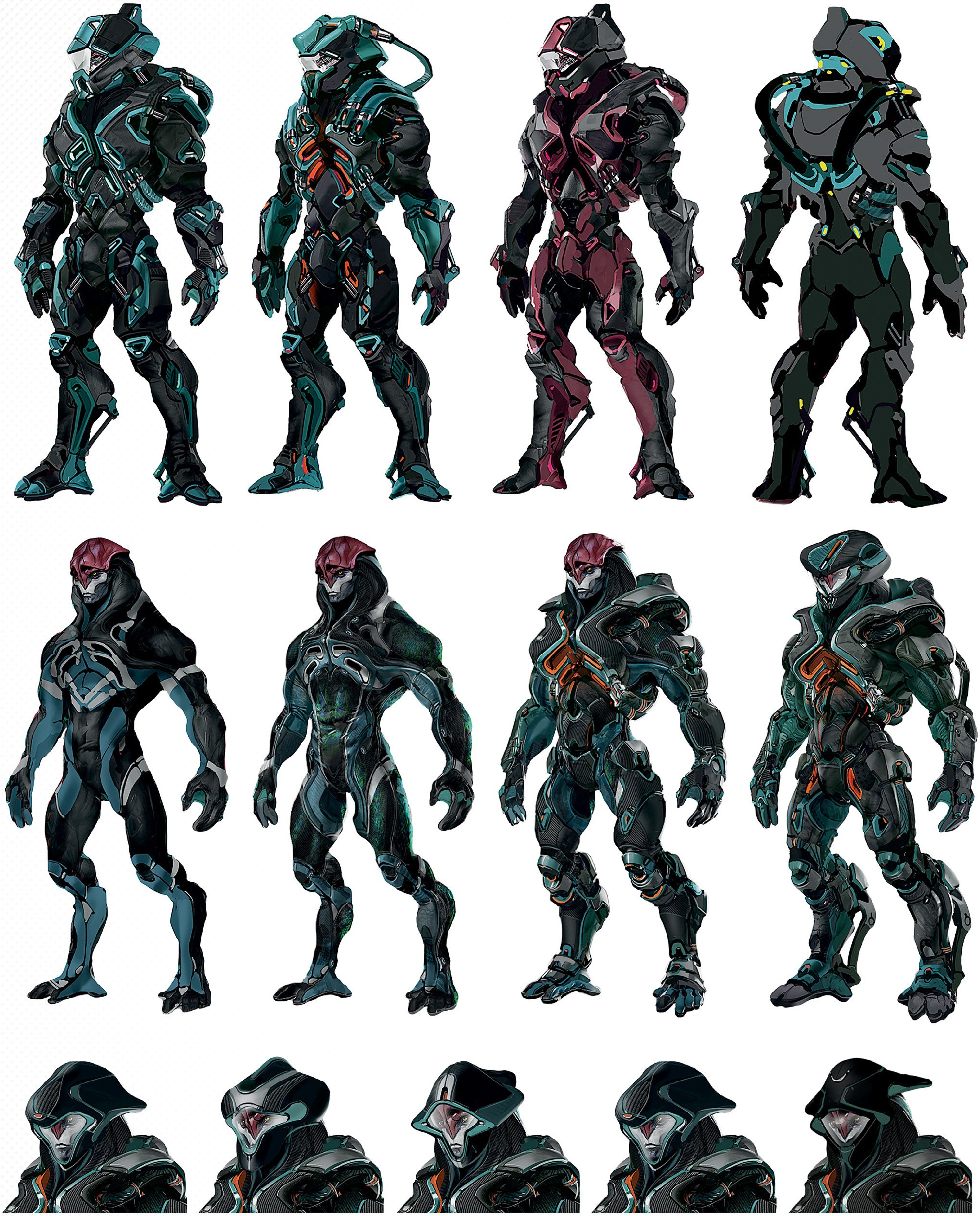
HL: With a new alien race we had to come up with new alien anatomy. They still need to have the same general frame as human anatomy—a torso with two arms, two legs, and a head—so that they can function alongside the rest of the squad.

CC: Designing the angara female and Moshae Sjefa was something that we did toward the end of the project. It was a challenge because all of the anatomy needed to fit the underbody for variation purposes.

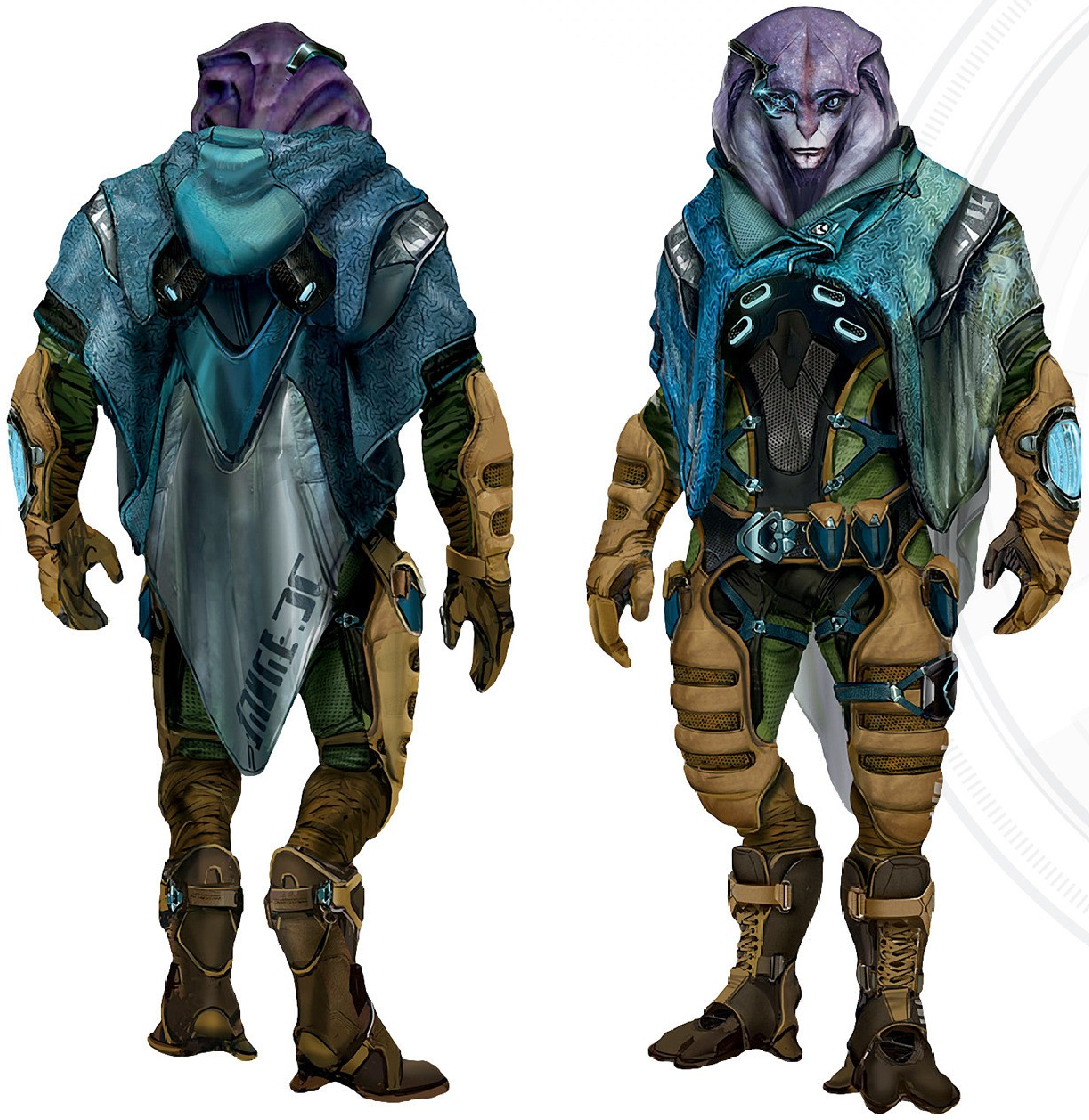




HL: These are the final angara heads. The facial features are very close to humans so that the audience can rapidly identify their emotions.



HL: These are early studies of the angara armor. We felt that these looked too much like the armors that originated in the Milky Way, so we went with something more organic and flowing in the end.



JAAL

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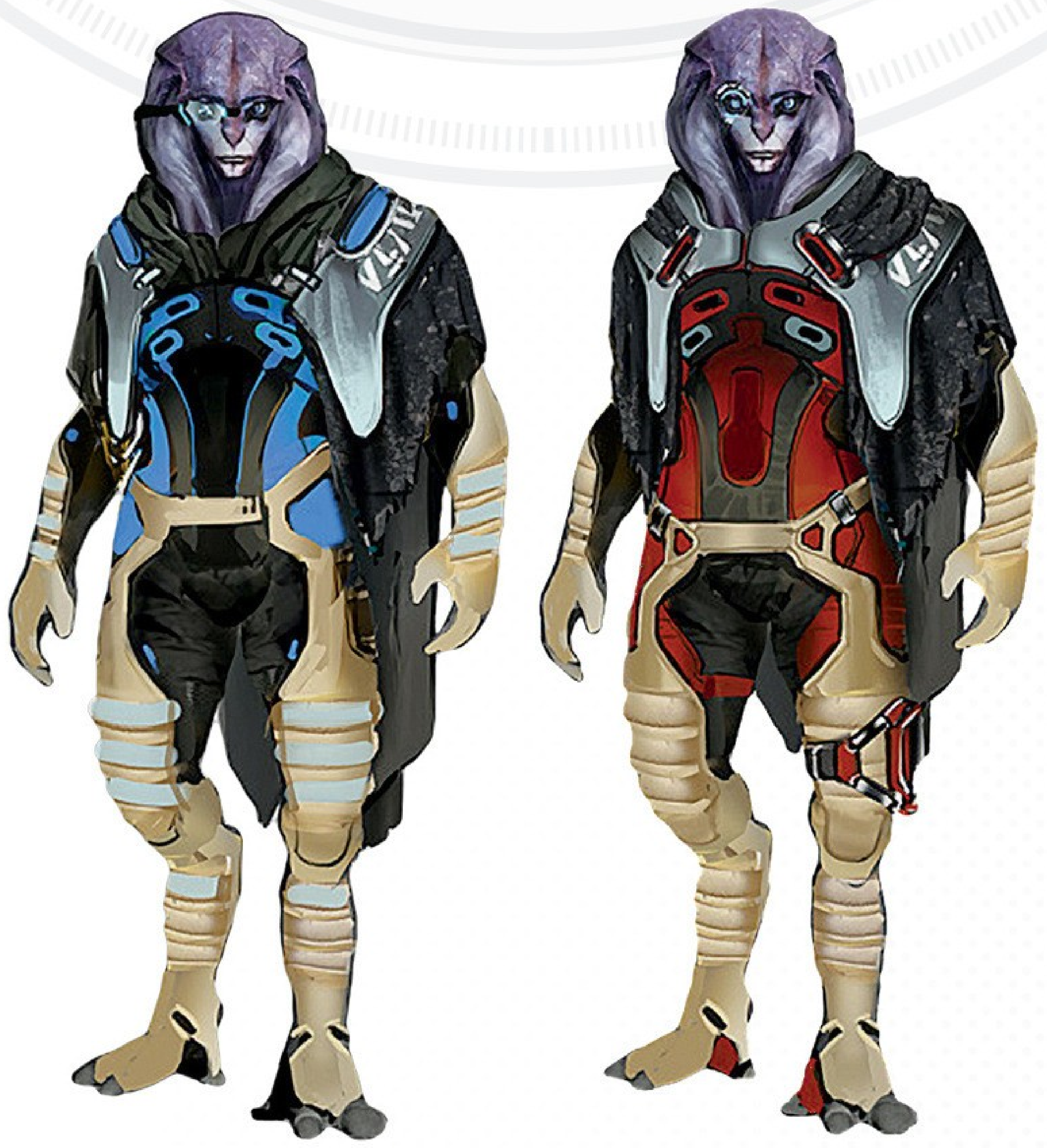
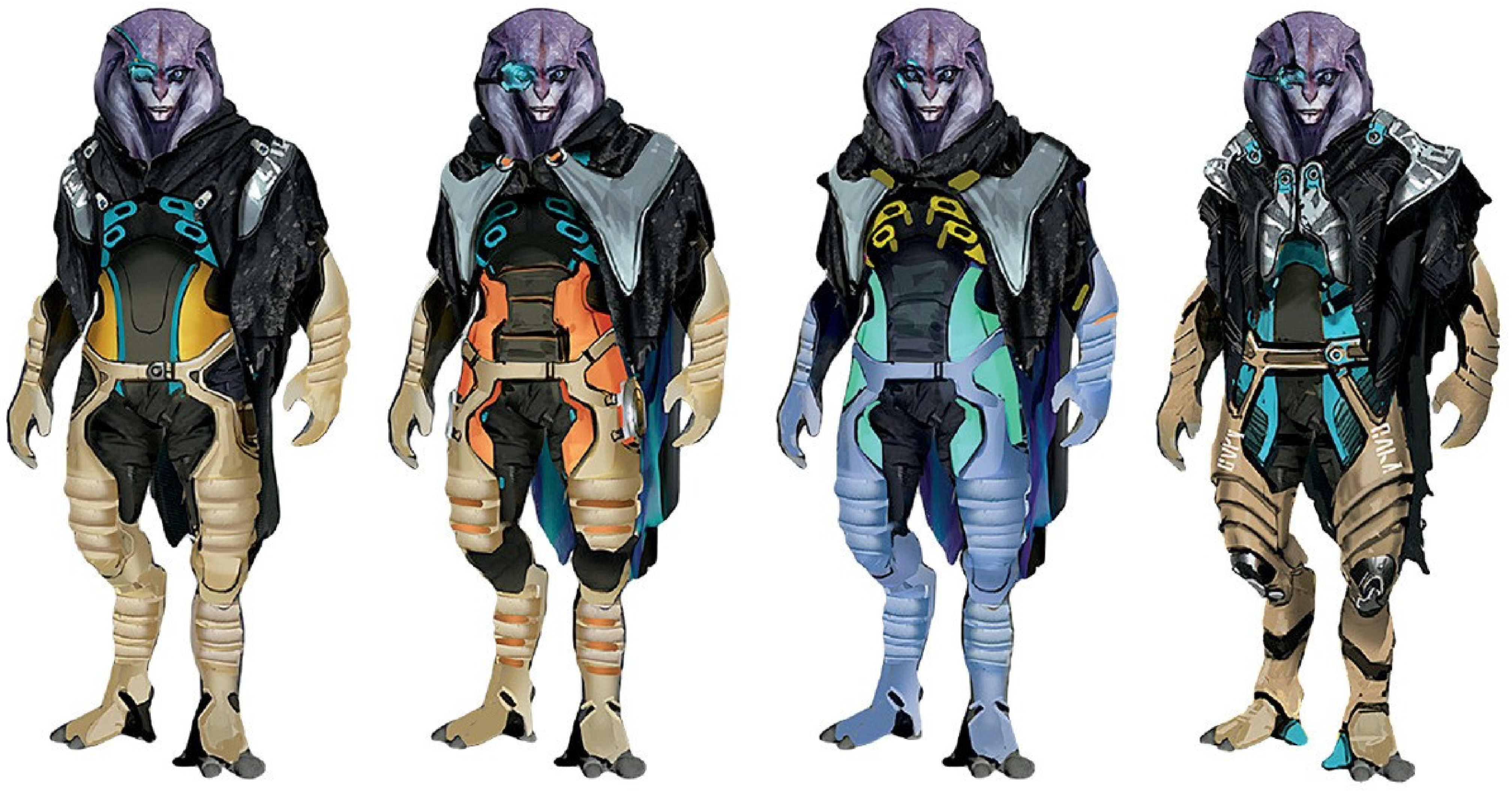
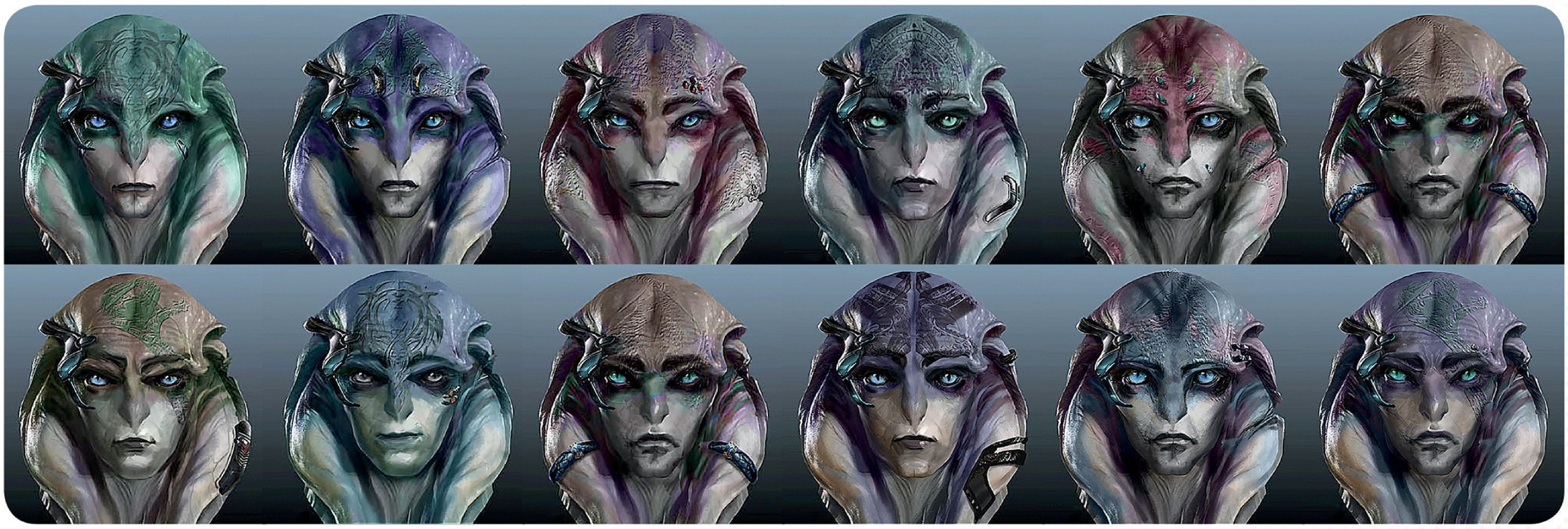
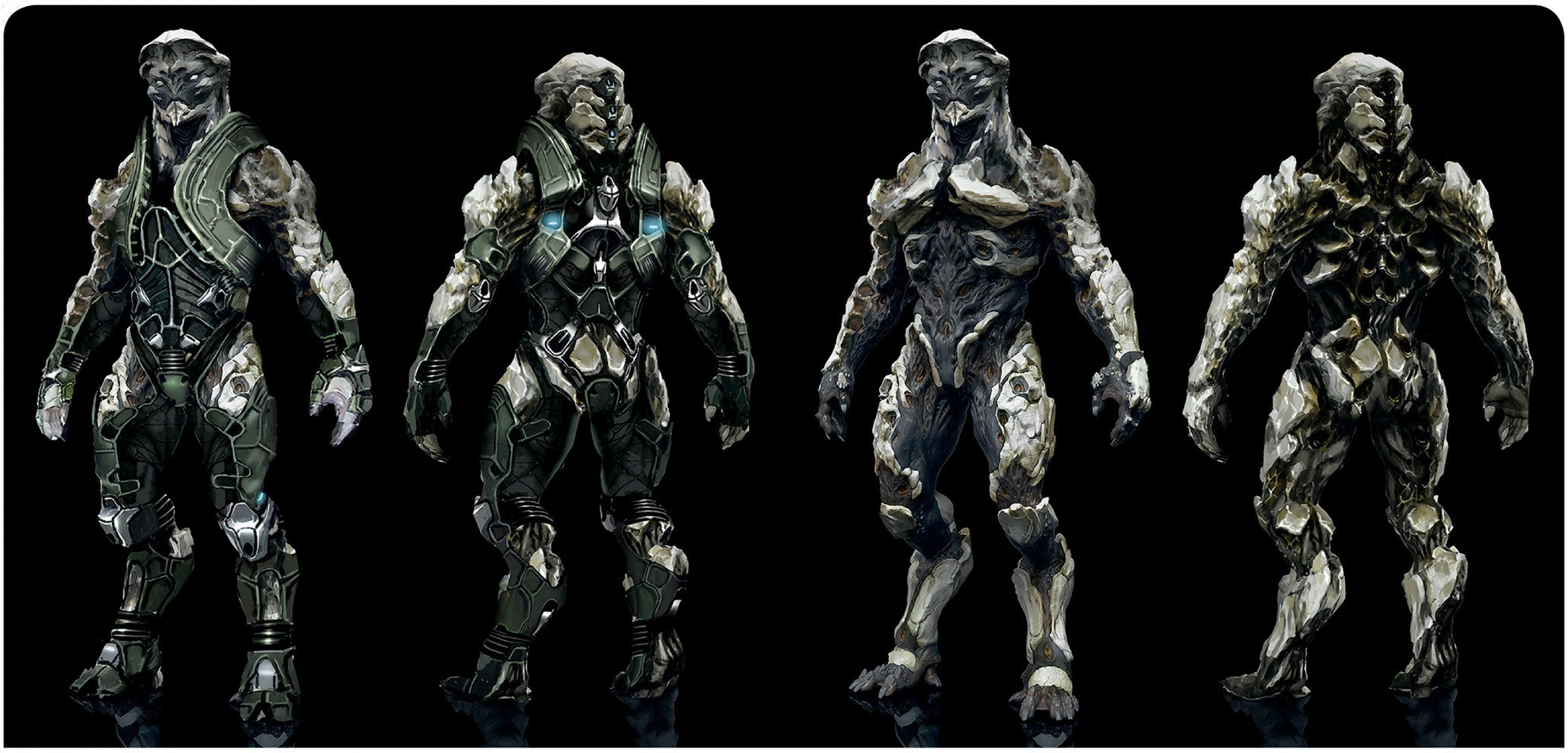
BL: Jaal was the first angara that we worked on, so designing him was a long process. We had to come up with the base of what makes angara different from all the existing alien species. We played with the overlapping straps and frames, and tried to push for color, as they are a more colorful race. They are a race that uses lots of cloths and fabric, so you see a lot more of that on the other angara in game.

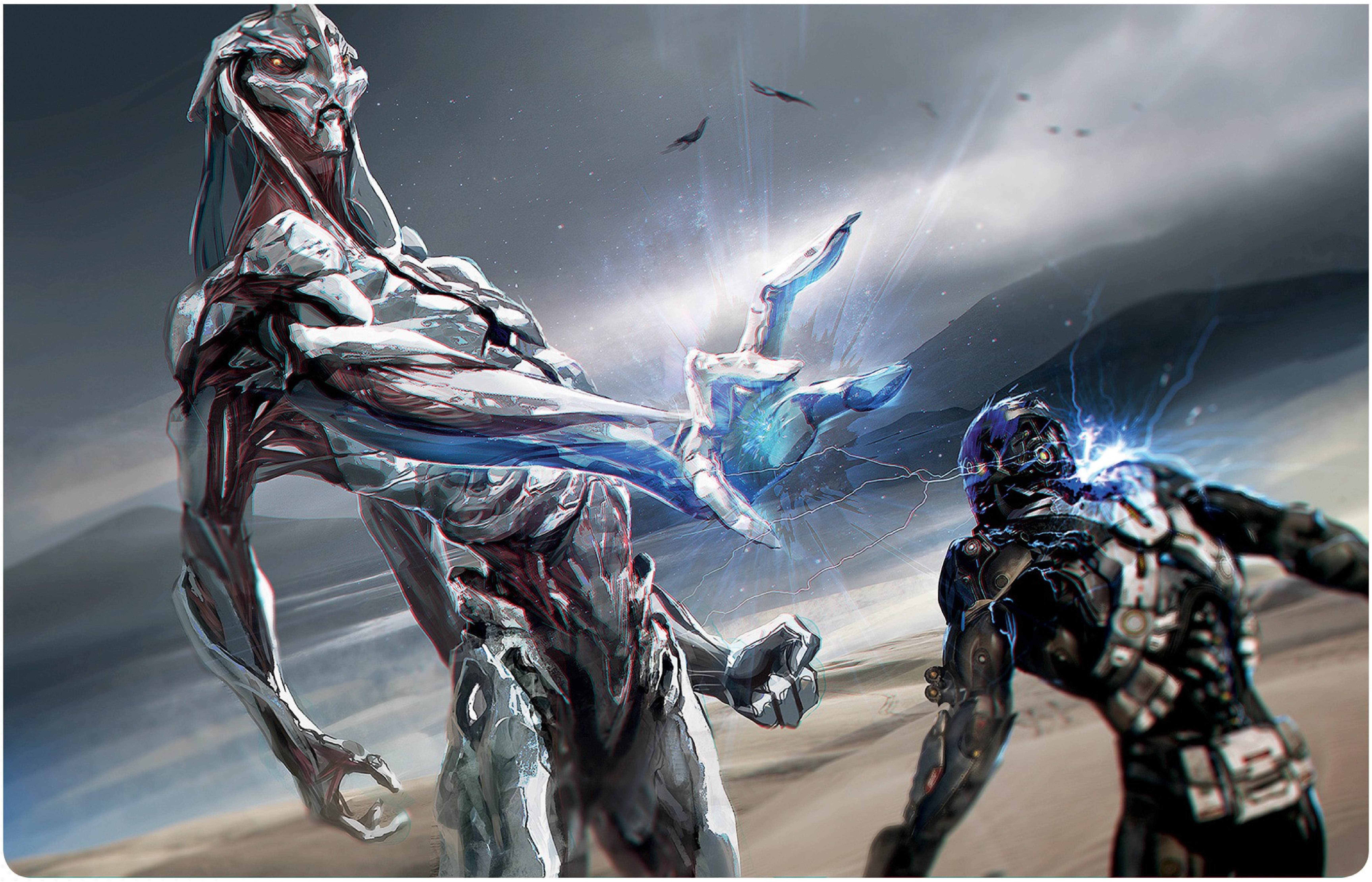
HL: Jaal was one of the most challenging characters in the game, largely due to technical considerations surrounding his wardrobe. It took the effort of several departments to get the cape to work in the game, but we are all extremely happy with the final result.







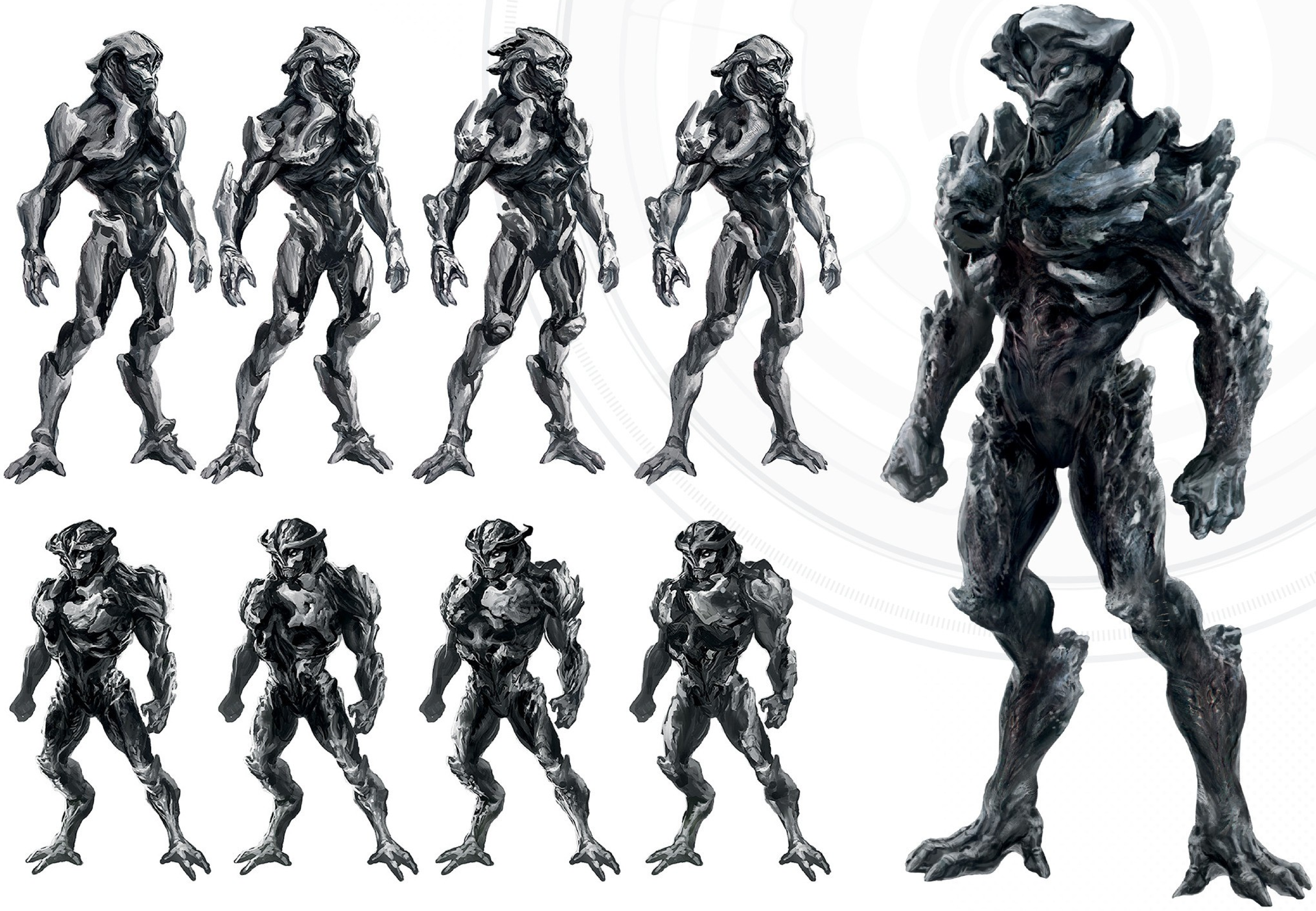


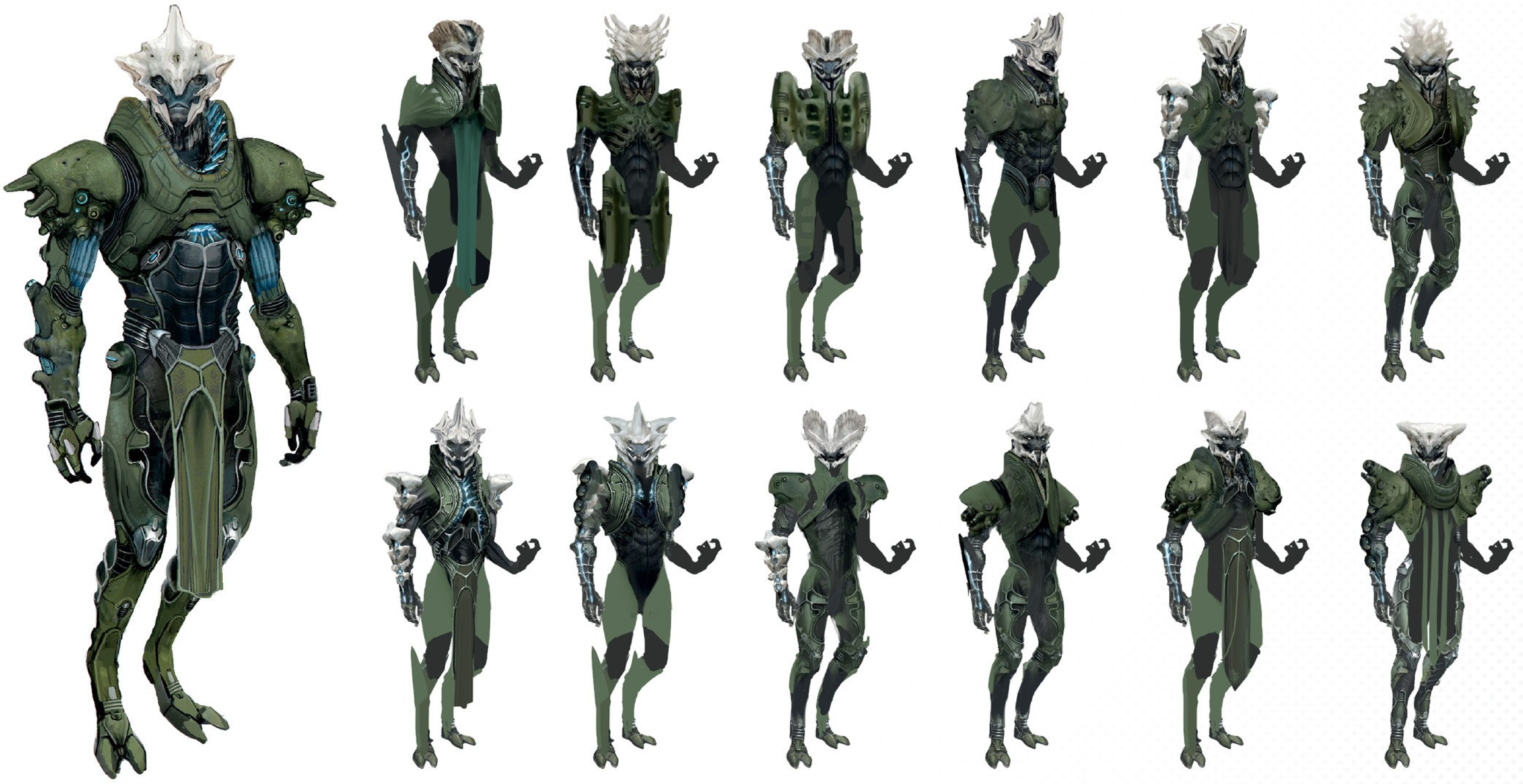


KETT

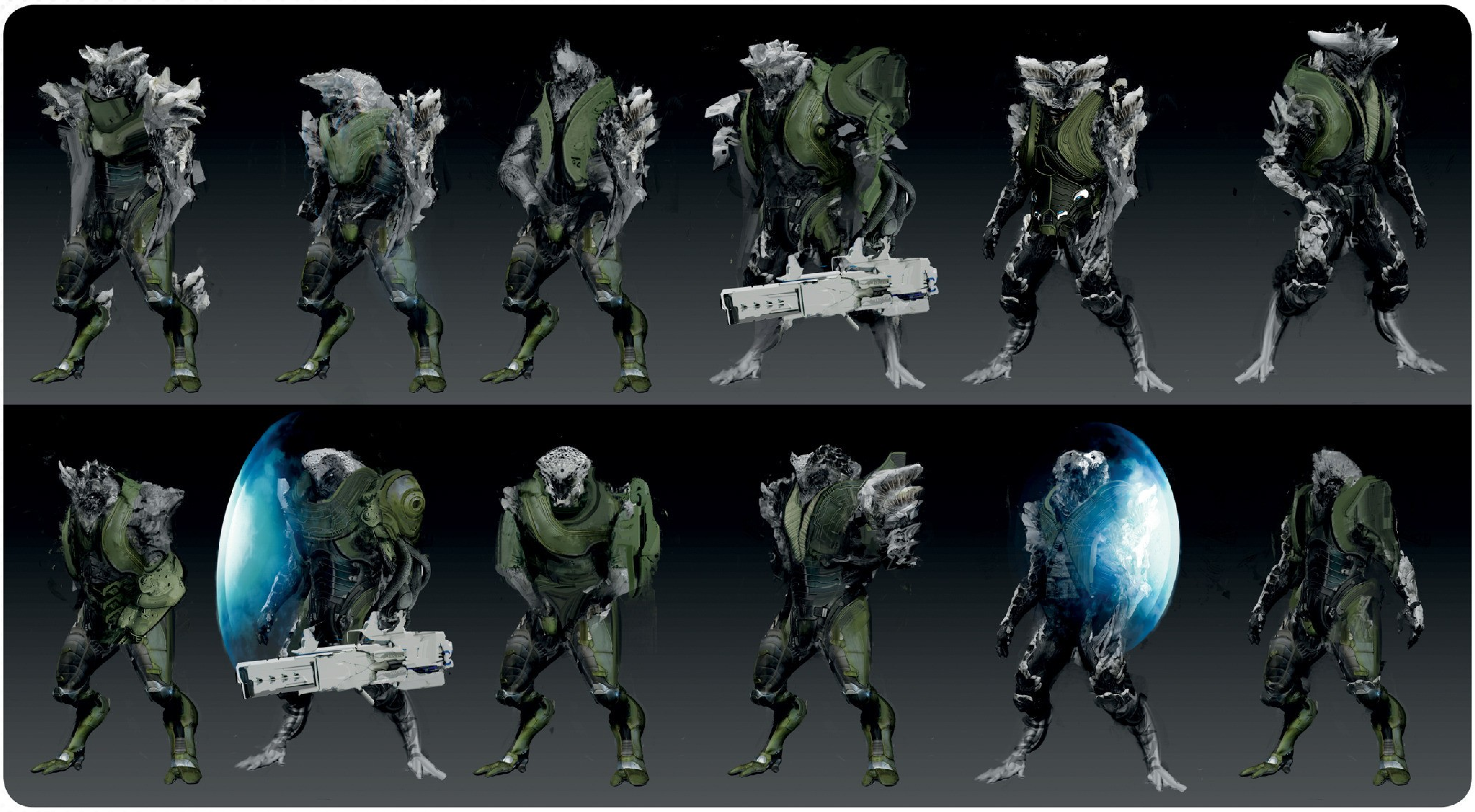
HL: The kett are one of the main new races introduced in *Andromeda*. They are basically the bad guys, so they're not required to have as much facial expression as the angara. They can have angrier and more alien-looking faces.

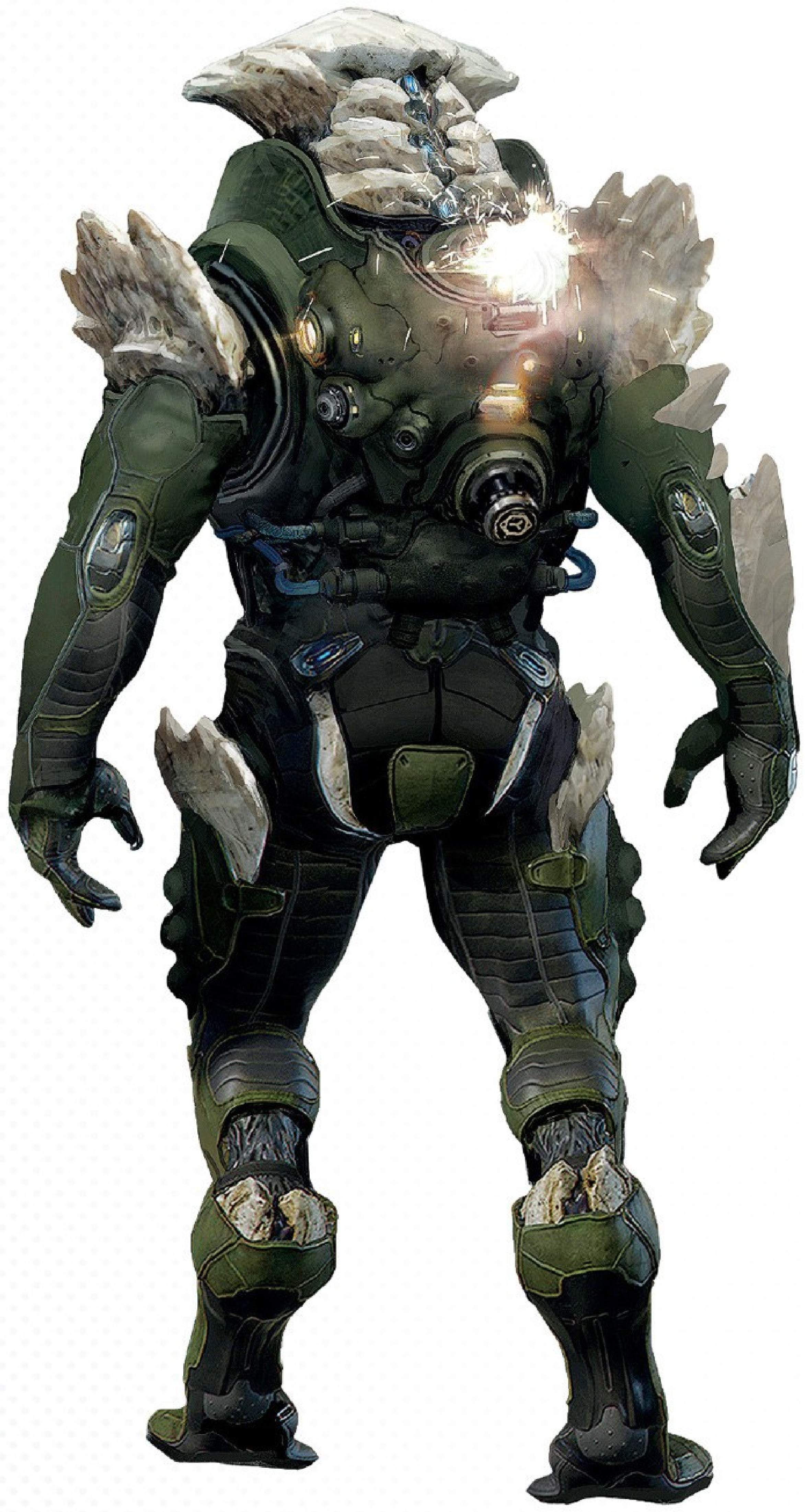
RS: I came on to the project about midway into production, and one of the first creatures I was tasked with designing was the kett, a species new to the *Mass Effect* universe. They are a superbreed that are masters of evolution, conquering and modifying themselves with the genetic material of other species.

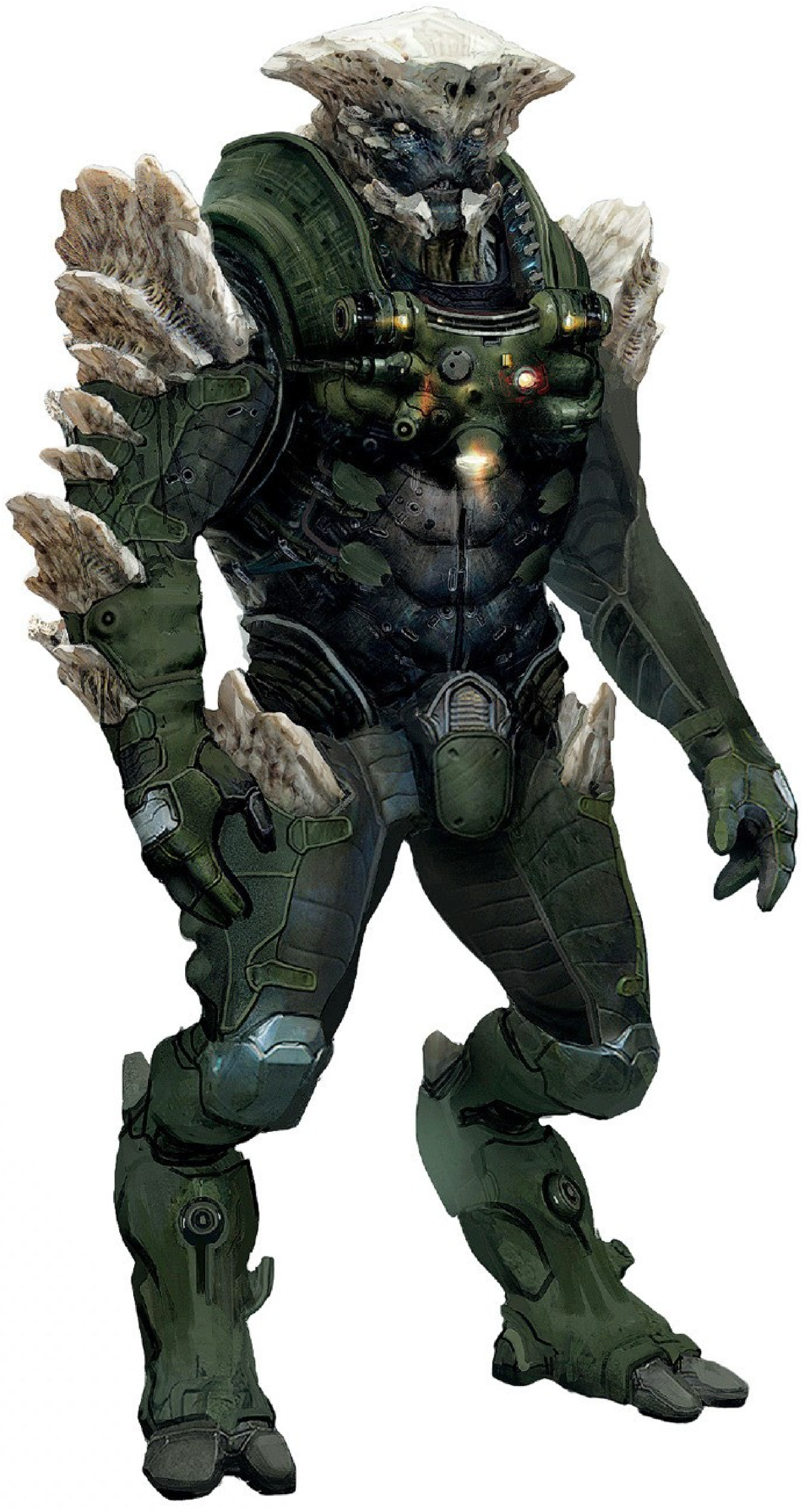


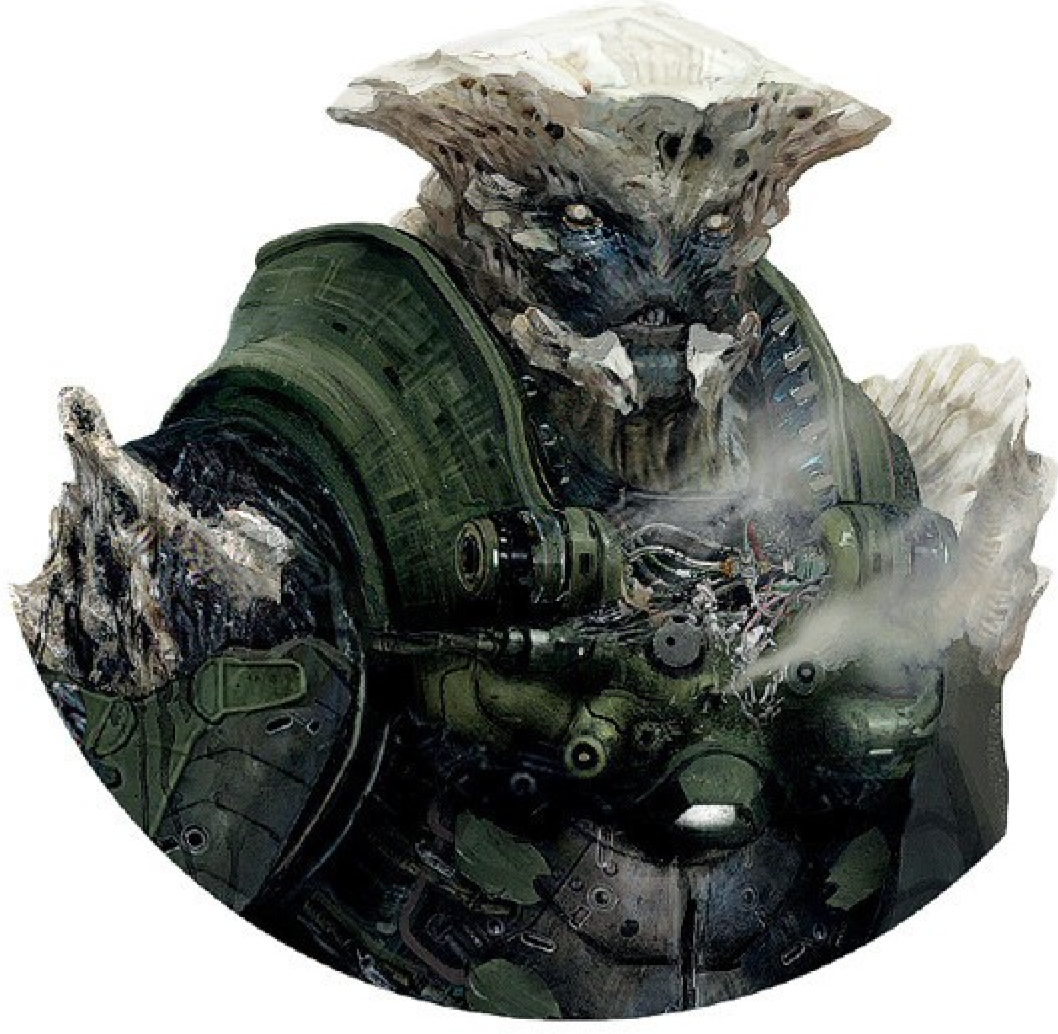


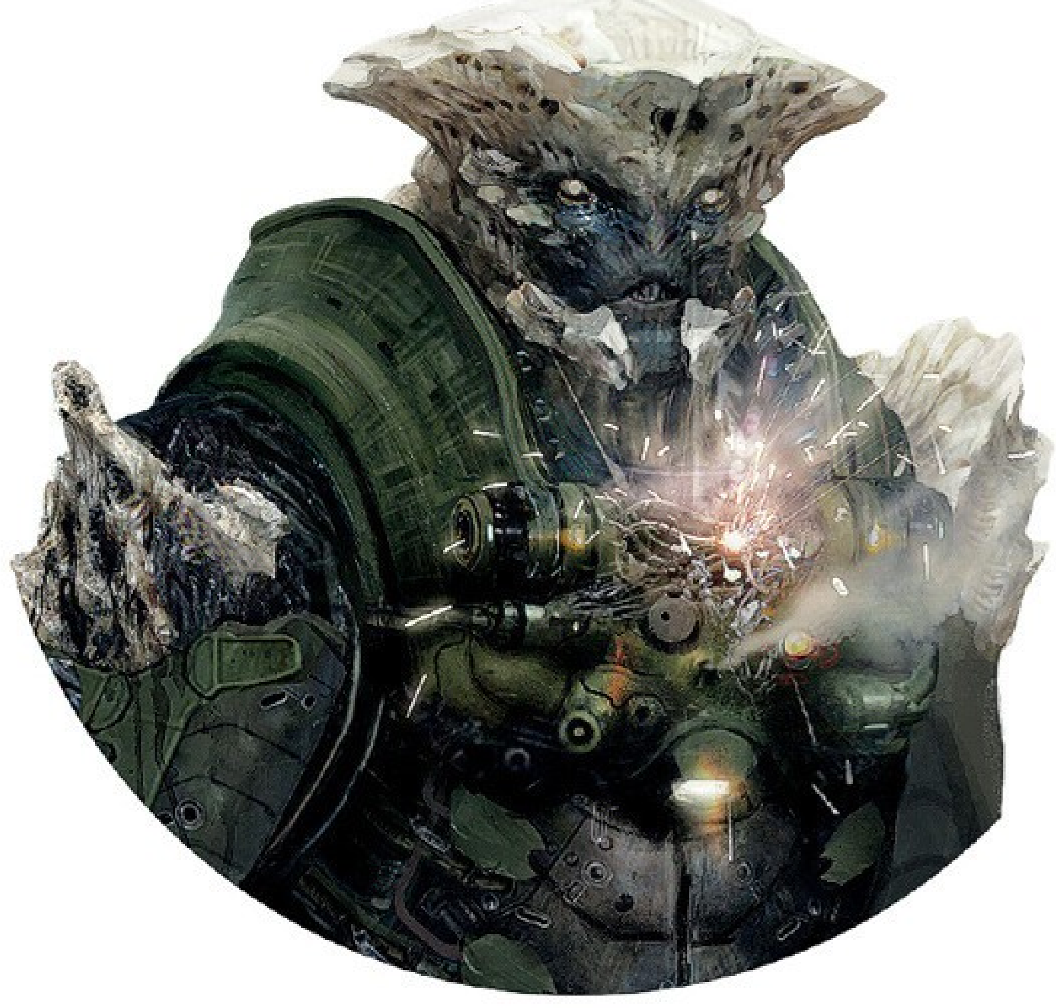
CC: The kett destined was my first model when I started at BioWare Montreal. It was great working on this since it was very different from the realism-based work that I'm used to.





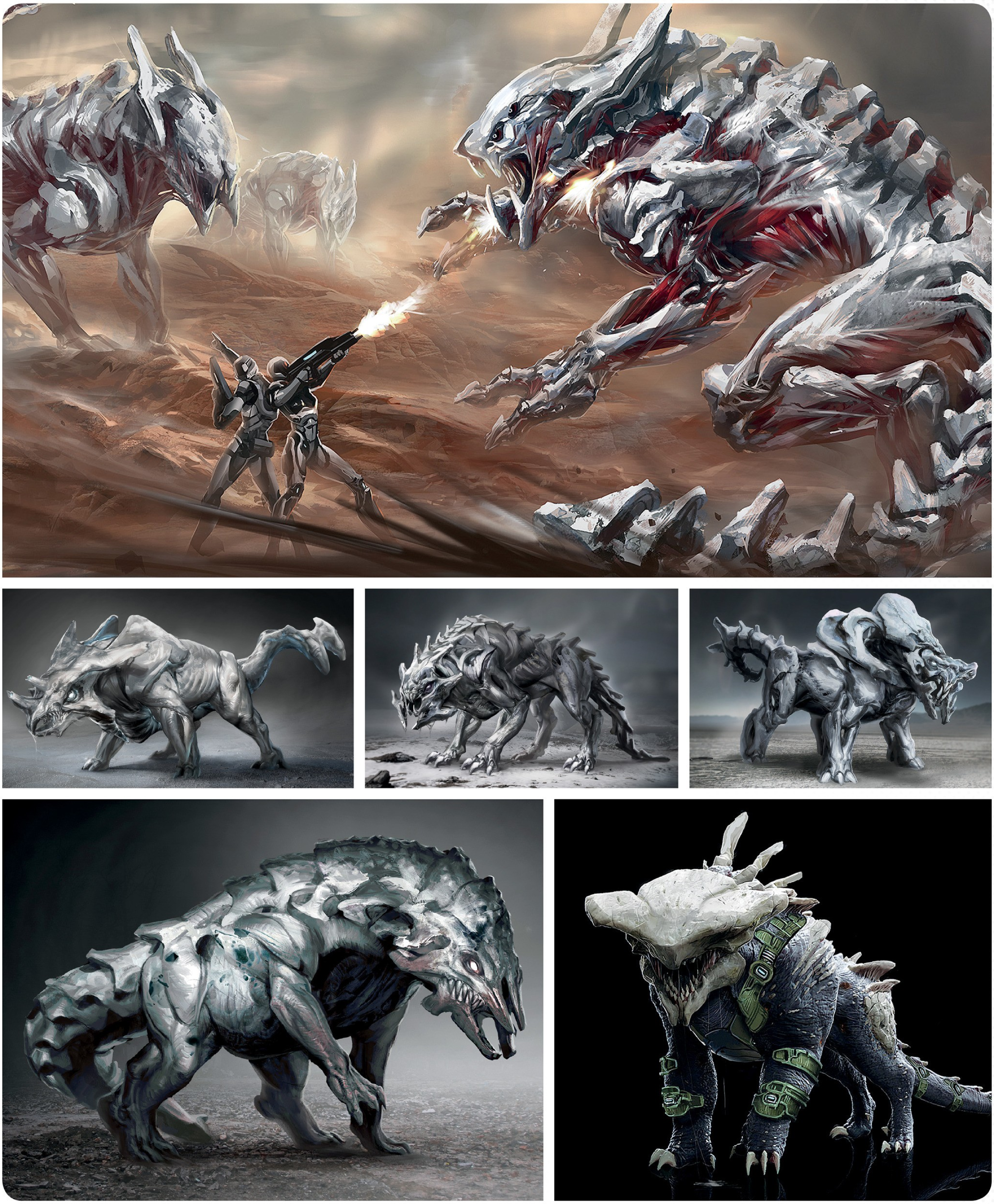




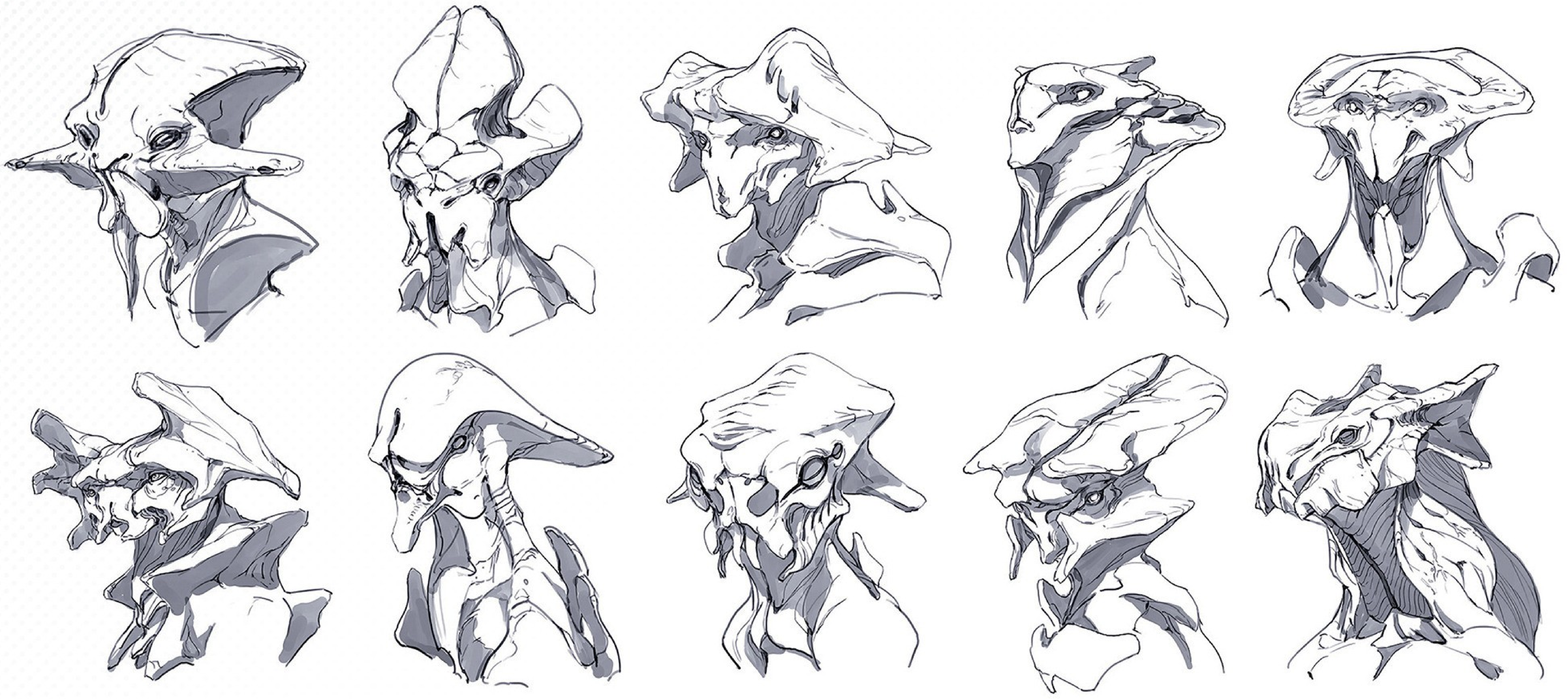


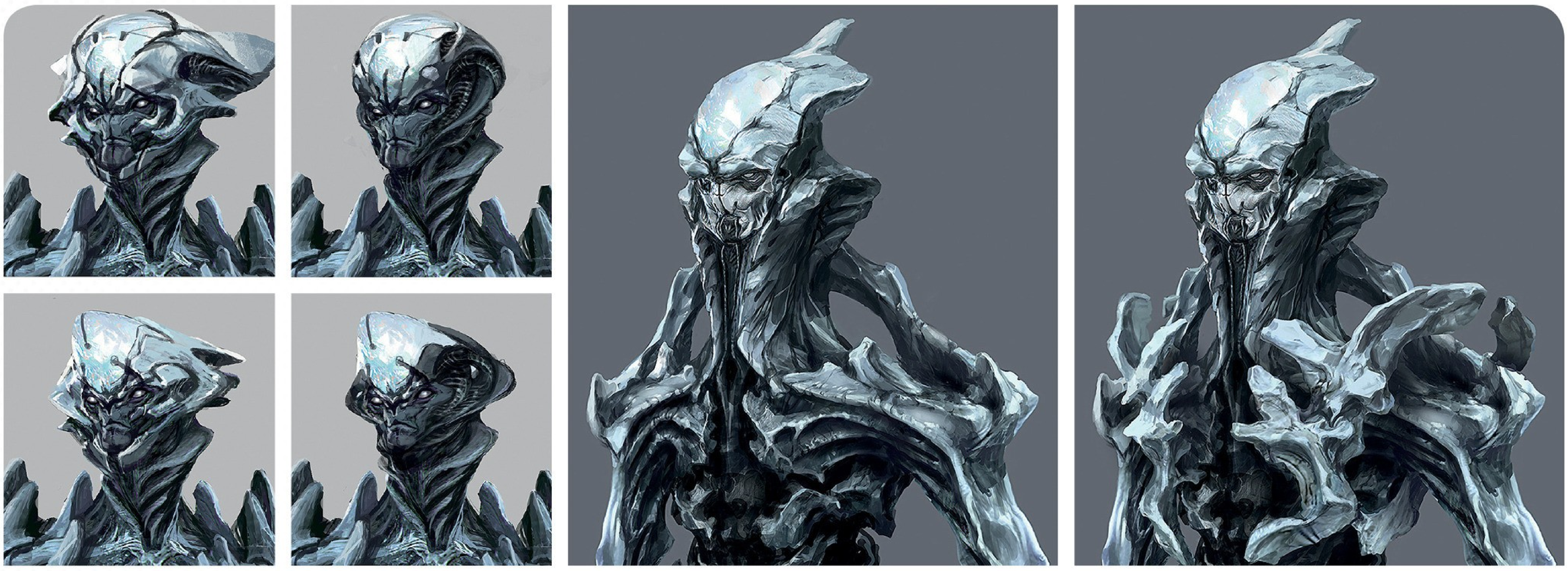
HL: This is the kett anointed—the bruiser of the kett army. He is a big guy carrying a big gun! He serves as a tank for the kett.

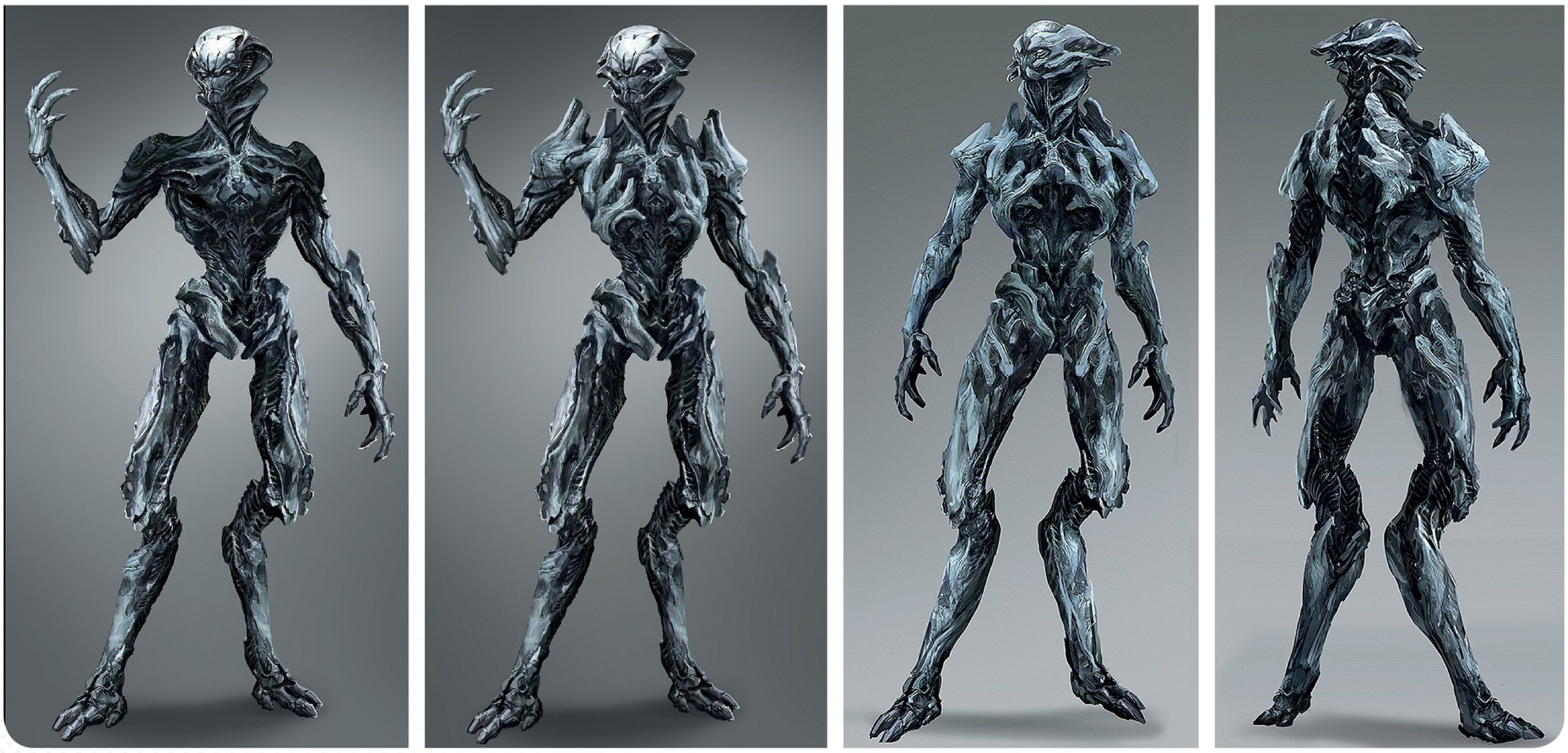
RS: The visual groundwork of the kett had been already laid by Joel, Brian, and Furio—all of whom did an amazing job with the palette—and my task was to take what they had done and expand our visual language and palette going forward. Since Furio did such a great job with the race, it made it that much harder to follow.

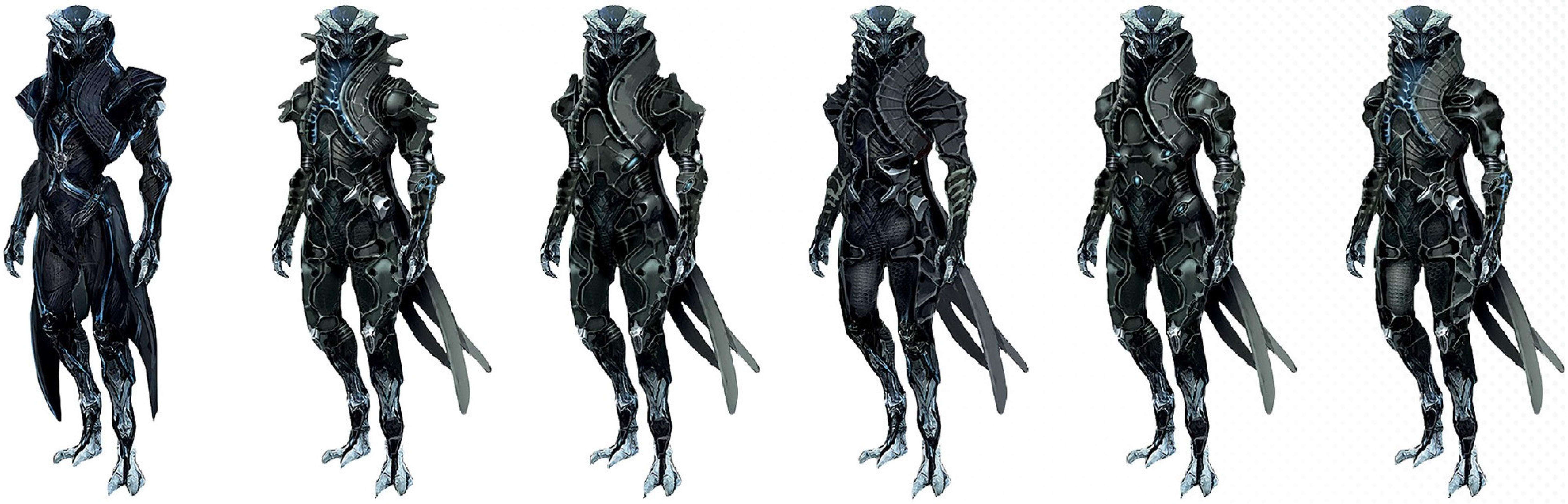


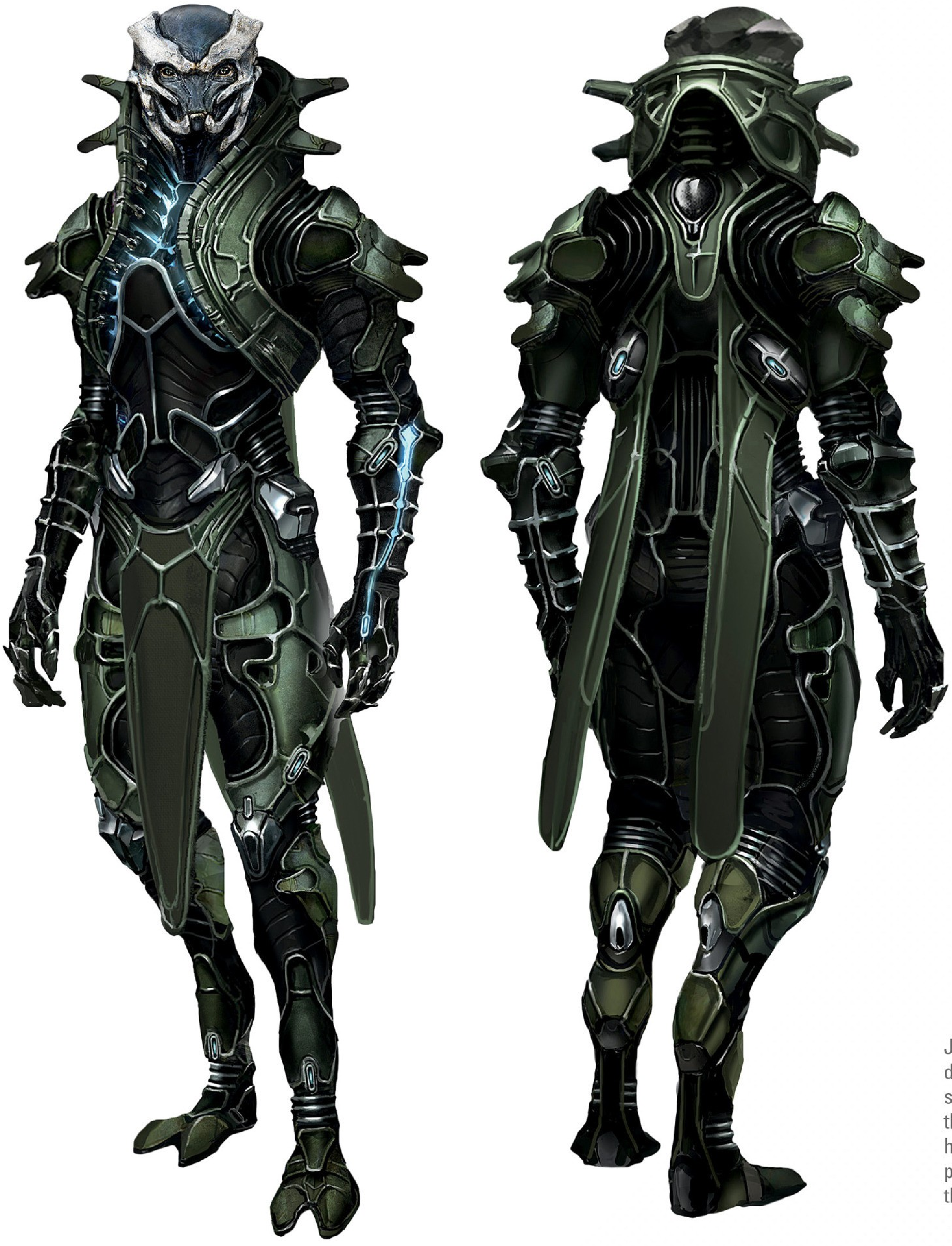
CK: This art shows the evolution over time of the kett quadruped. What started as a more traditional-looking wild beast would eventually evolve into something more substantial and intimidating. The final design would utilize armor components and a considerably bulked-up frame to help convey the role of the creature in combat and to evoke some fear in the player.



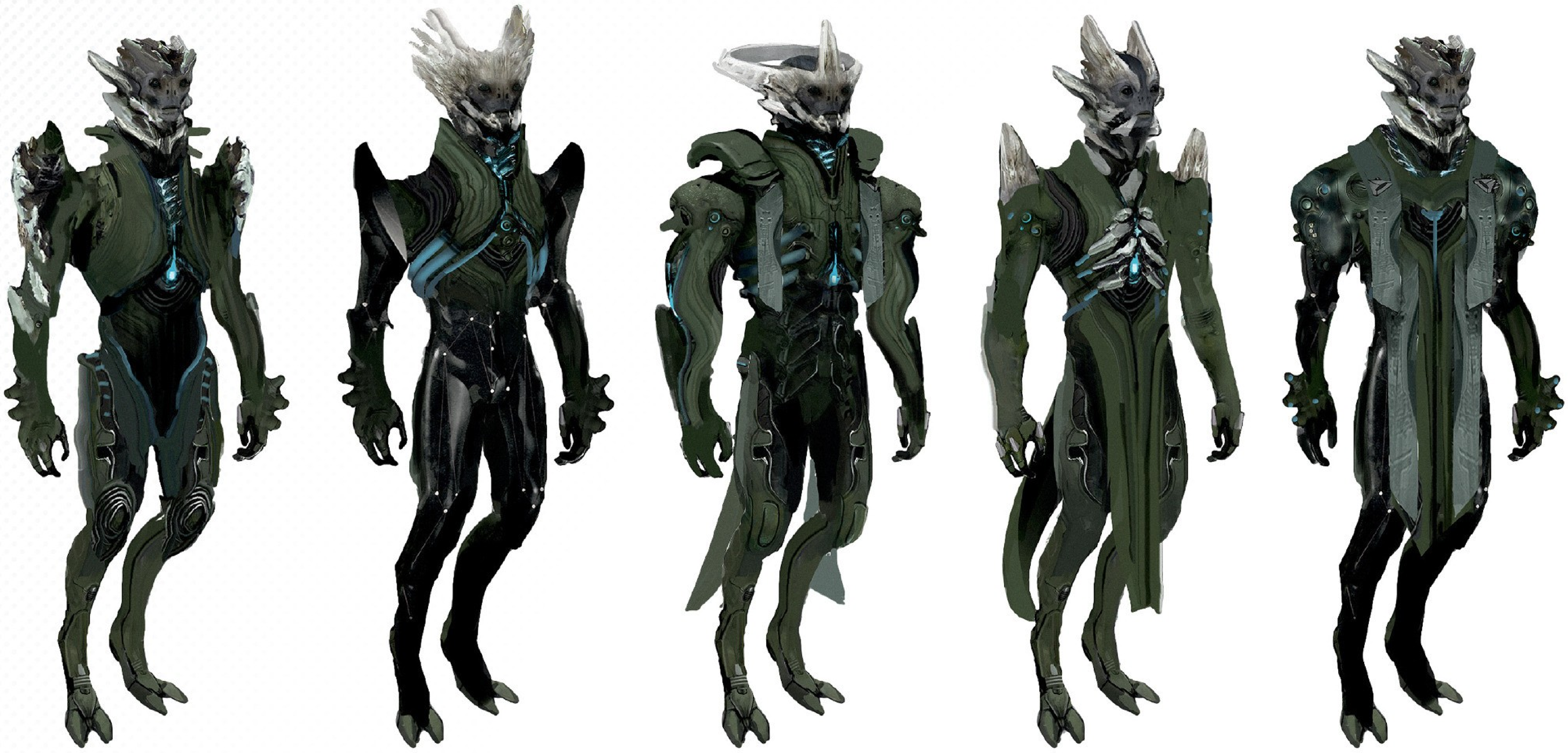


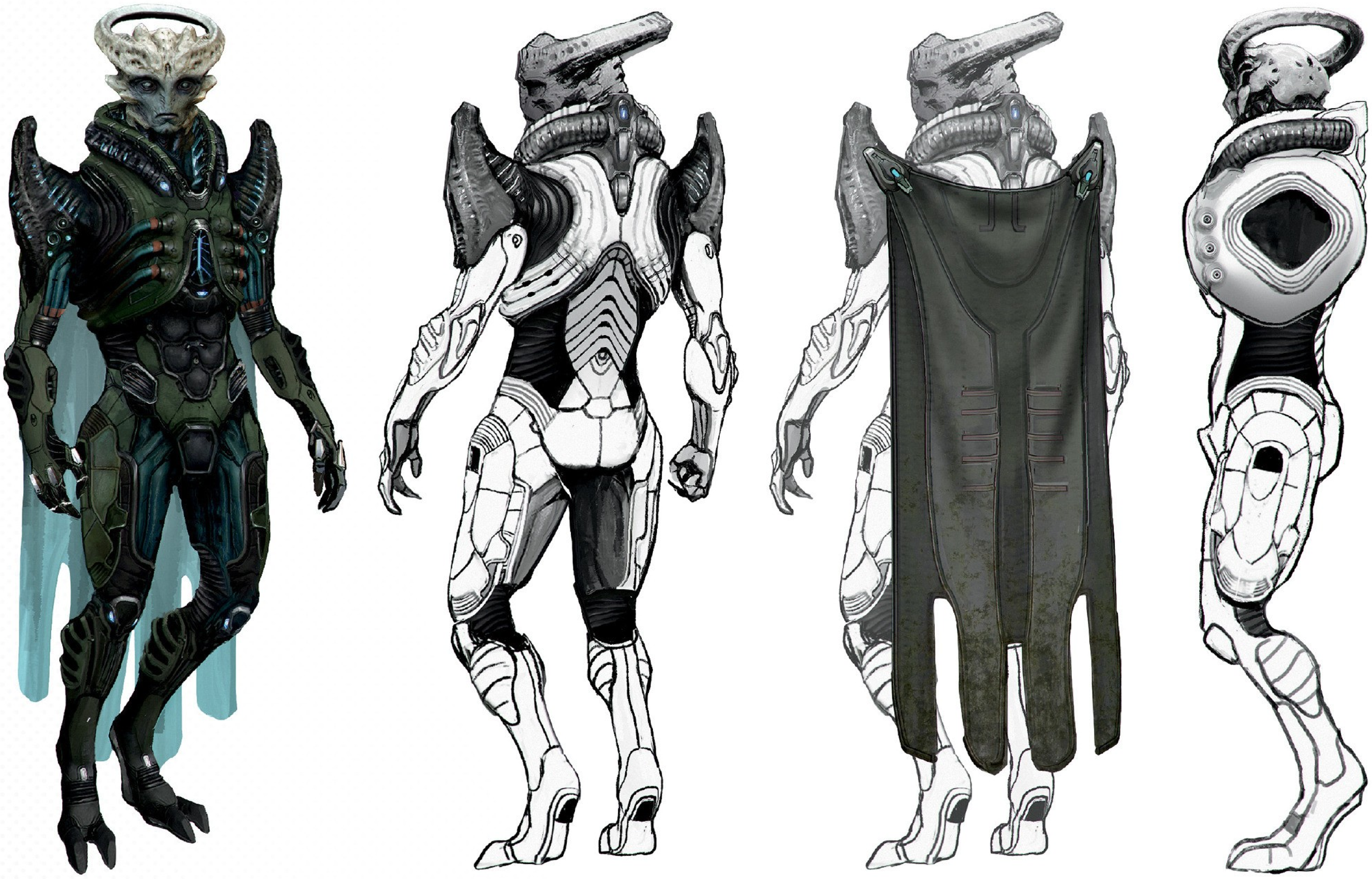






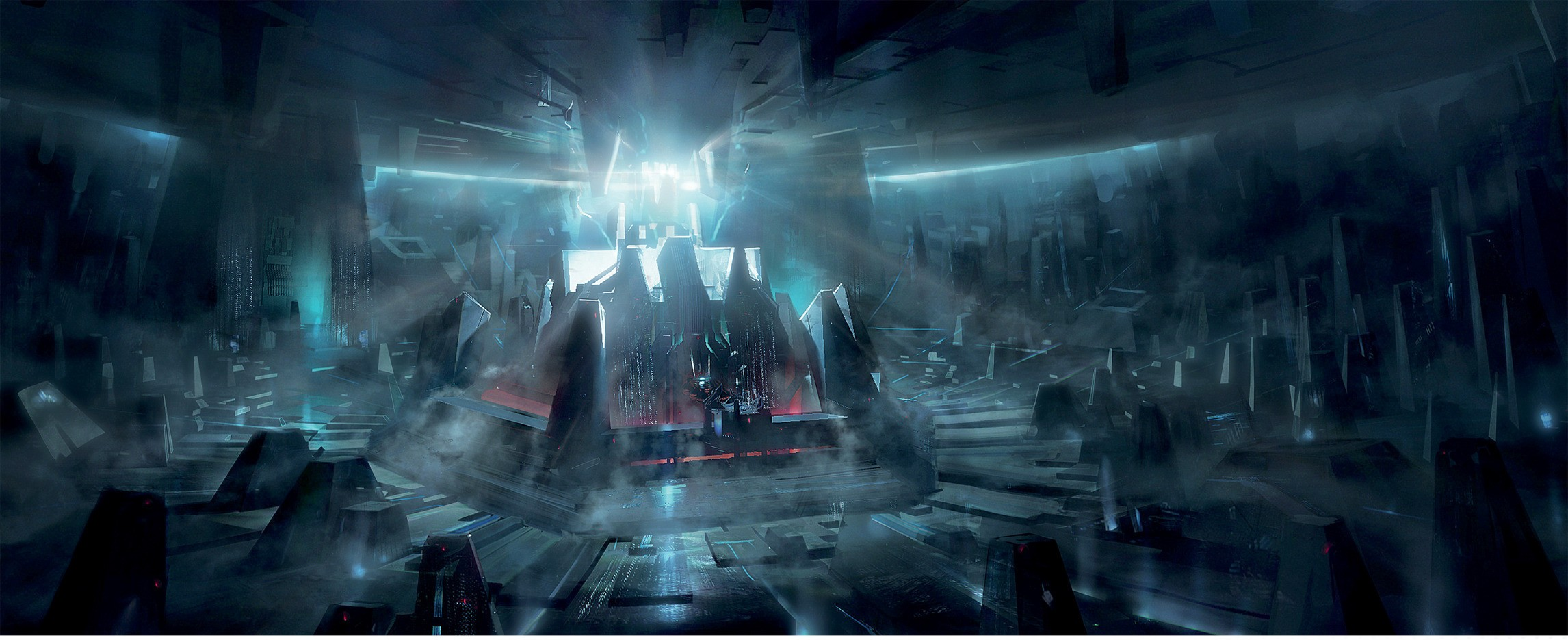
JM: On the facing page we have the original designs of the kett. They needed to be noble, somewhat relatable, but also imposing and threatening. We played around with different head shapes, trying some crowned silhouettes, playing up the frontal lobe, but always retaining the bone element.

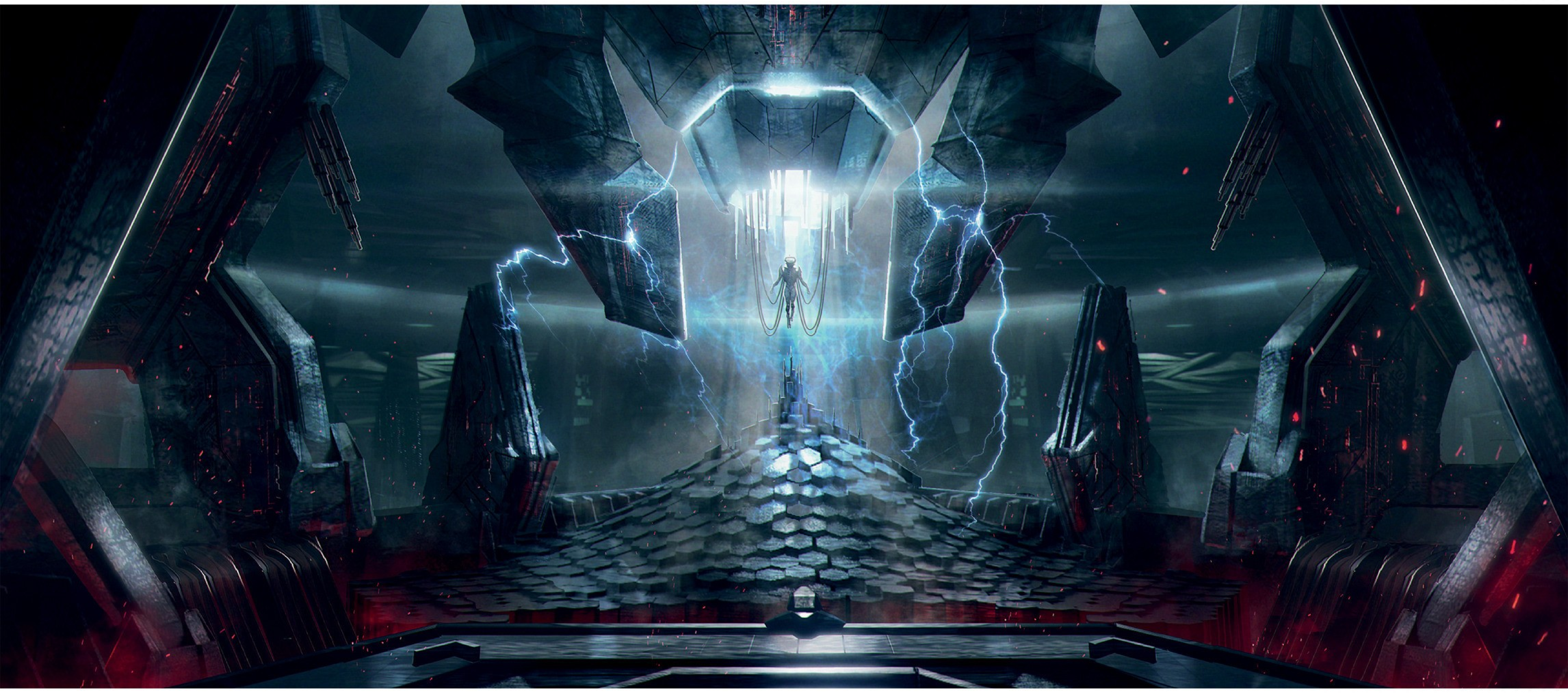


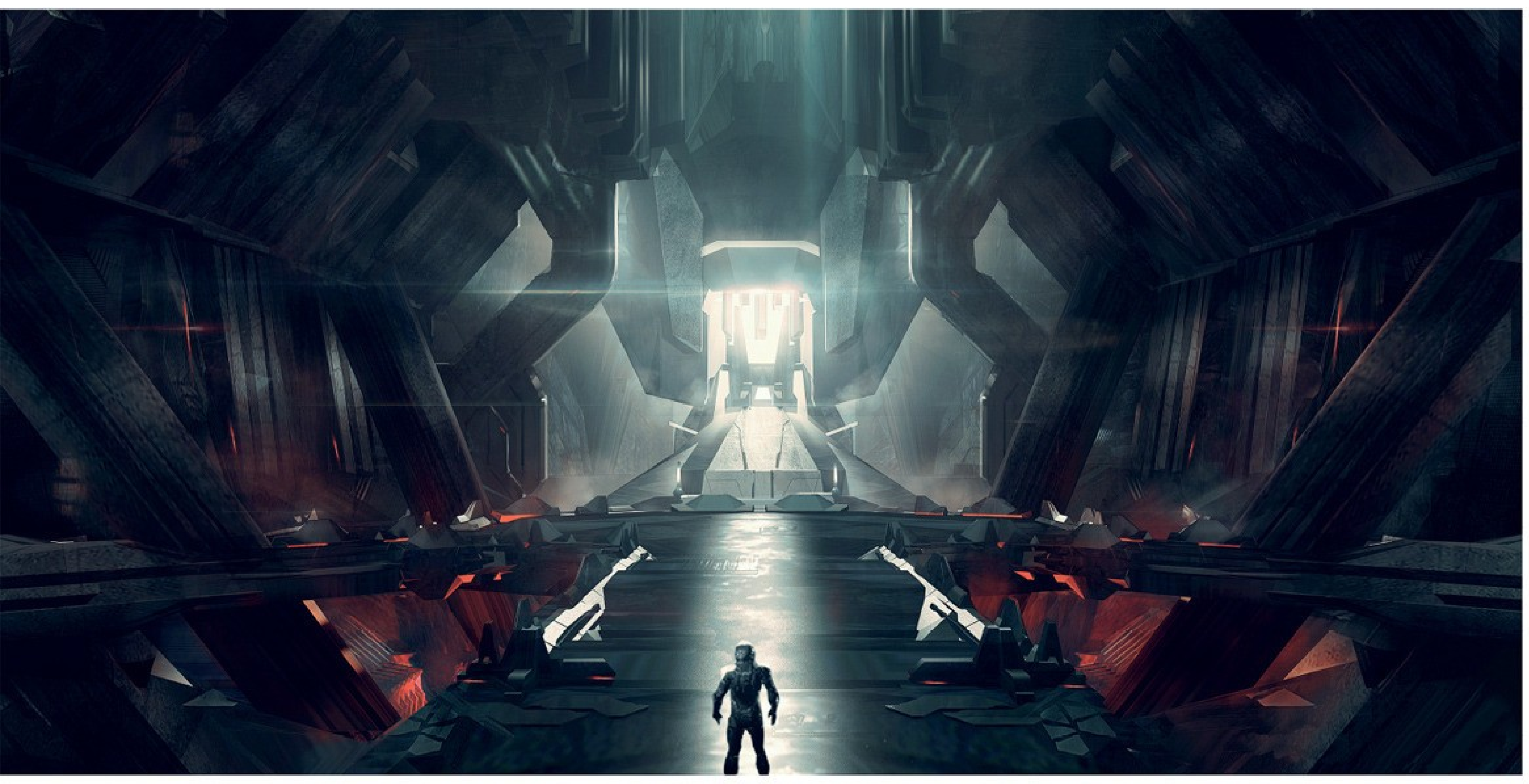


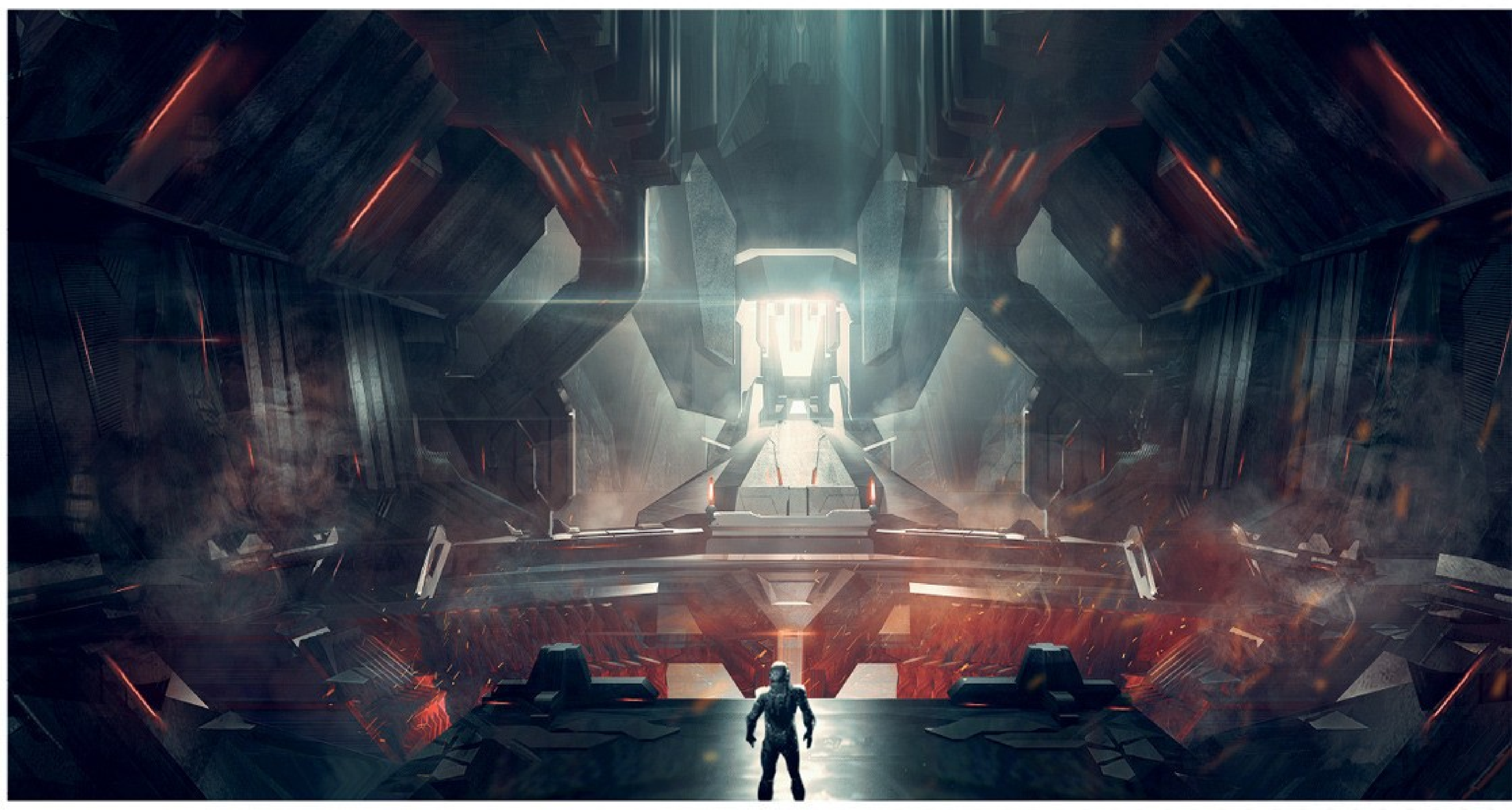
THE ARCHON

RS: The Archon's visual design originated with the ascendant kett, and slowly evolved into its own thing. The Archon was a character that we developed very deliberately, so even though we nailed the tone of the character very quickly, we spent a lot of time refining and tweaking details. We didn't want him to be physically imposing, but instead have an imperial, towering silhouette. We also did not want him to have an angry look to his face, but still feel intimidating—like a character that is perhaps a little obsessive or delusional. Part of the challenge in creating his face was to have him emote like a human, and one of our chief goals was to ensure that he's visually emotionally relatable.





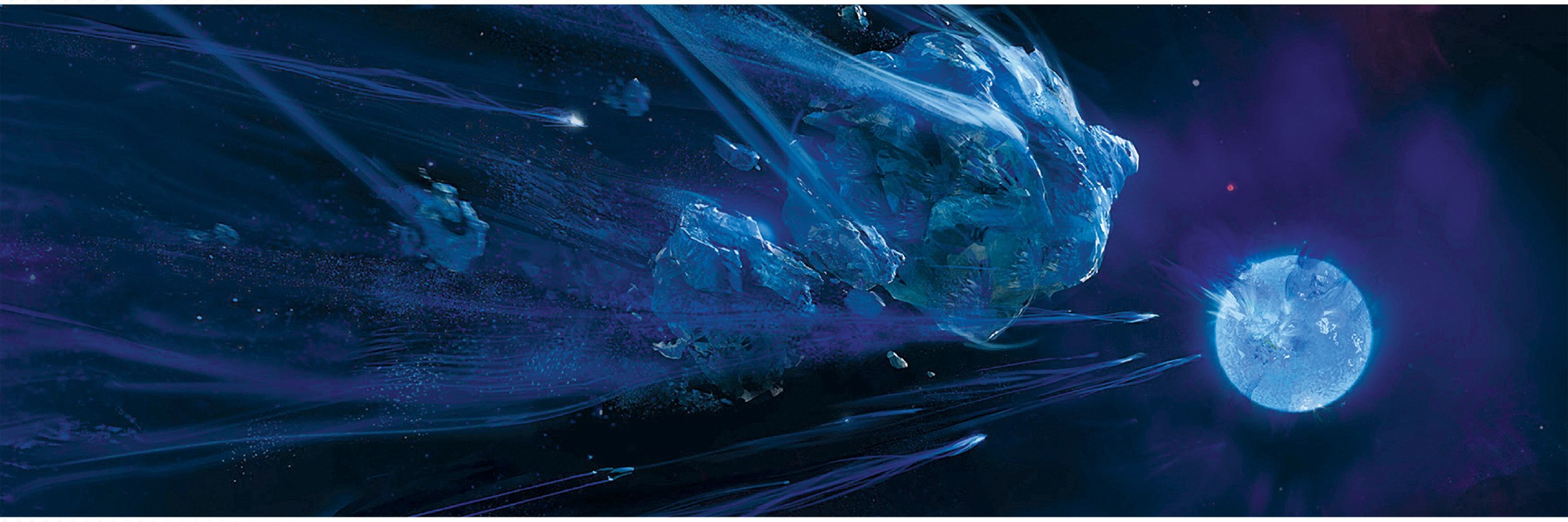


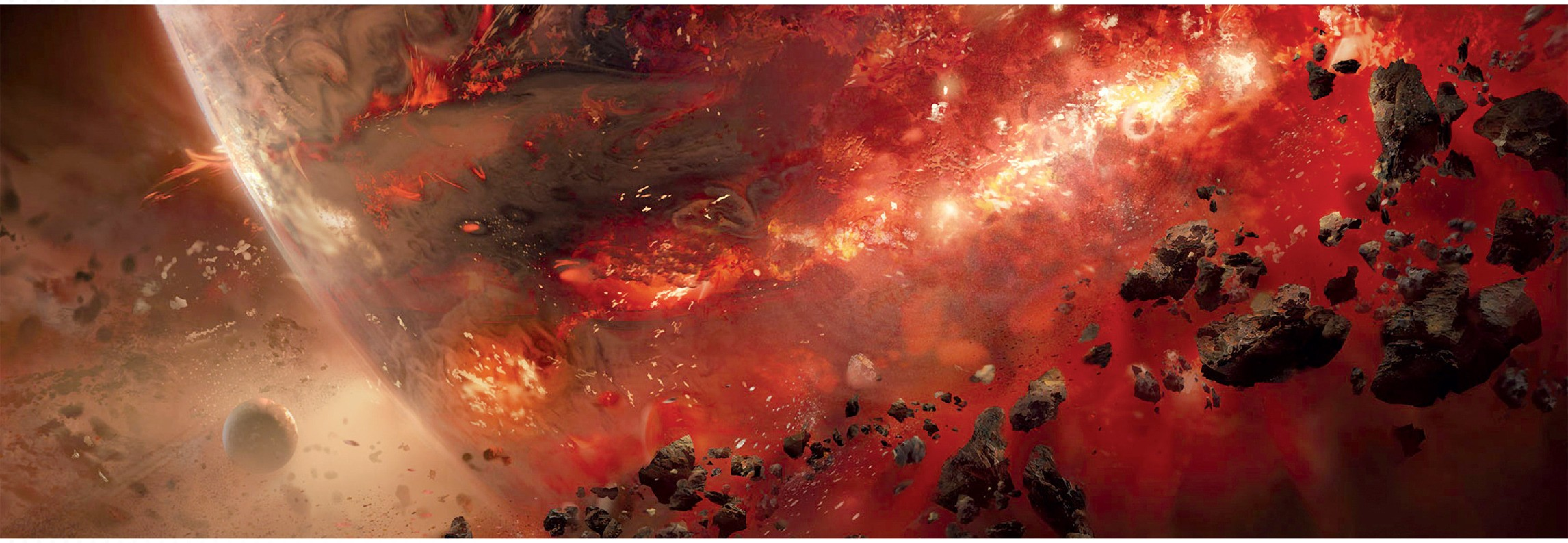


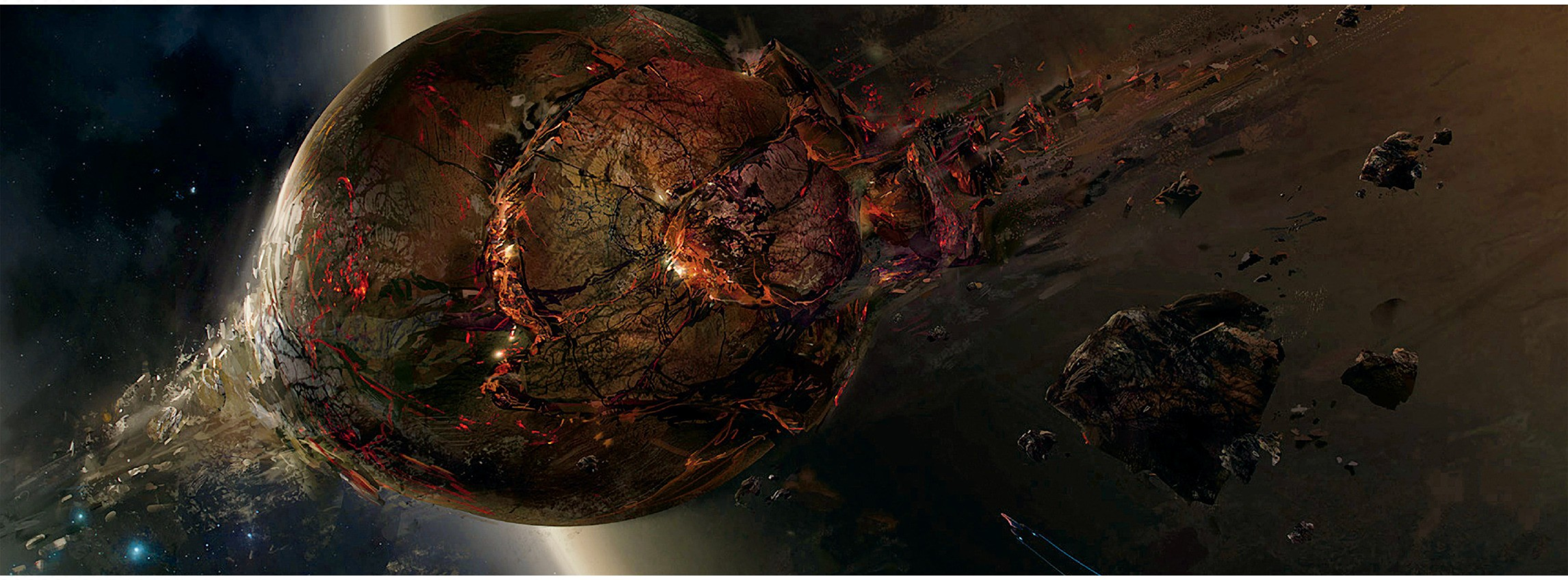
KF: Fleshing out the final encounter proved to be an intimidating task. The location features two drastically contrasting areas: Meridian's surface and its inner core. While its surface showcases the Remnant's ability to terraform an entire Dyson sphere with pristine landscapes, its inner core was meant to embody the Remnant's mysterious origin and monolithic machine-like bodies. It also needed to communicate characteristics of a power core capable of generating a large amount of energy. One of my favorite features is a very subtle appearance of the iconic *Mass Effect* arc in the background—albeit inverted.

WORLDS AND INSTALLATIONS

HOME AND AWAY

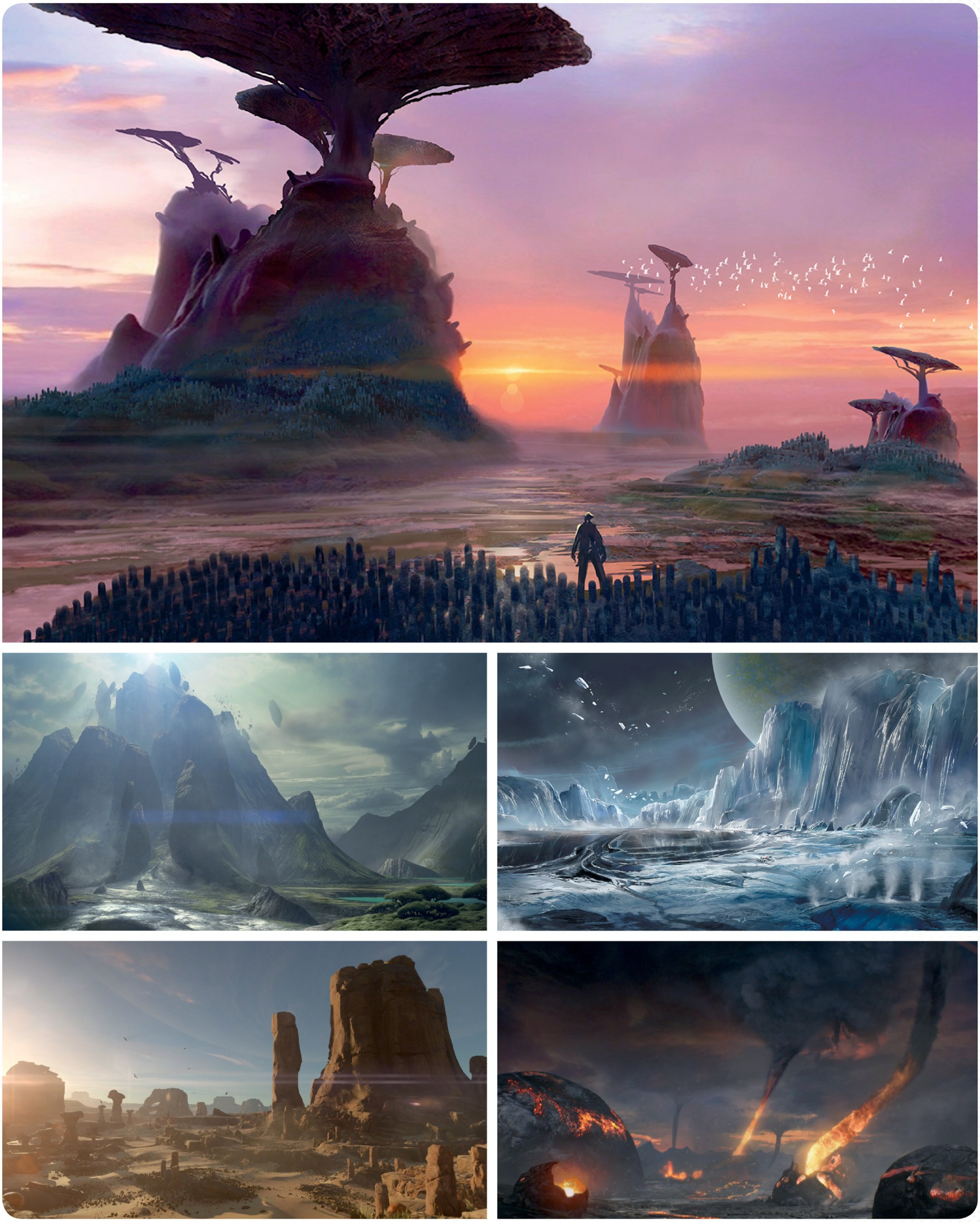




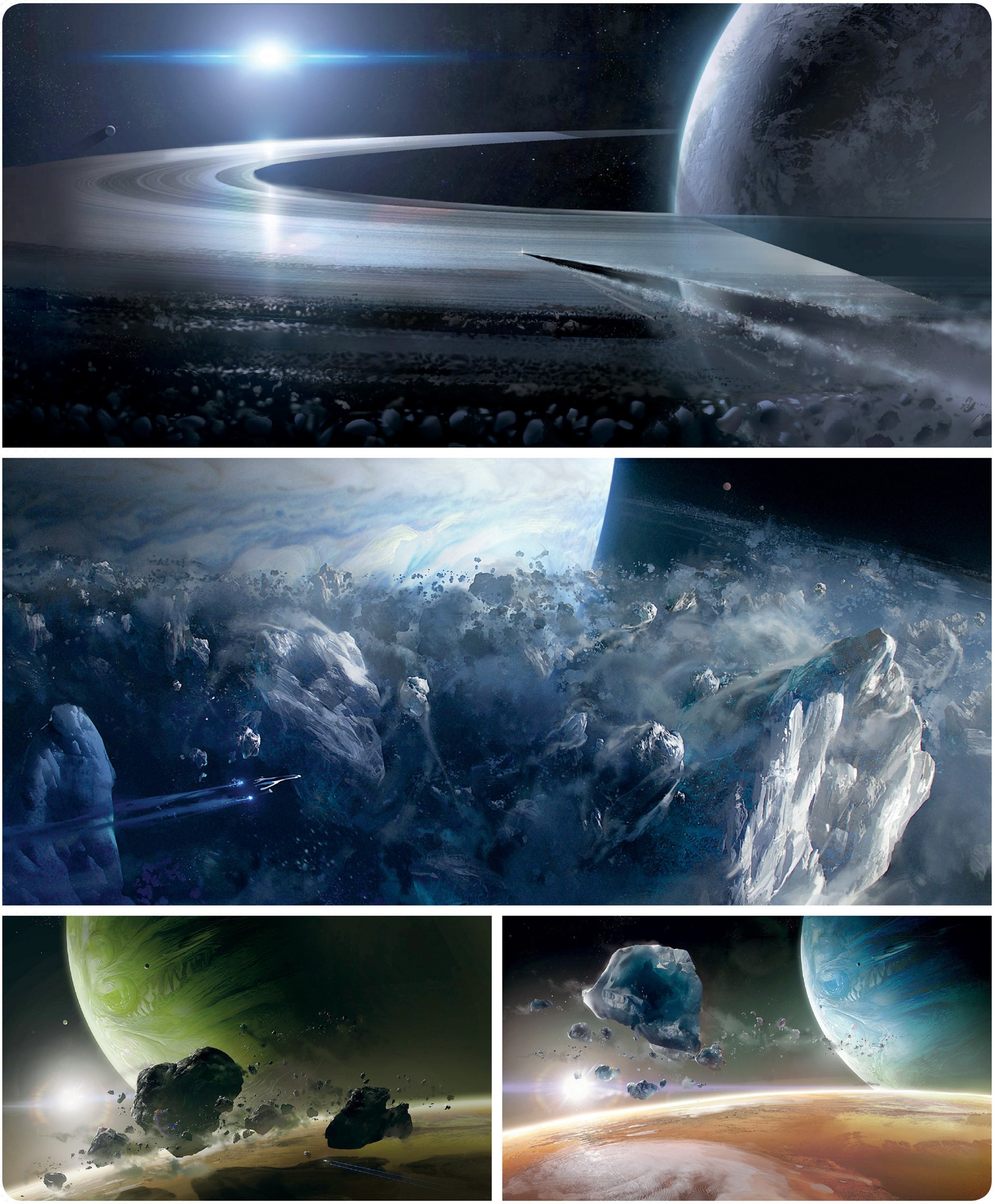


SPACE

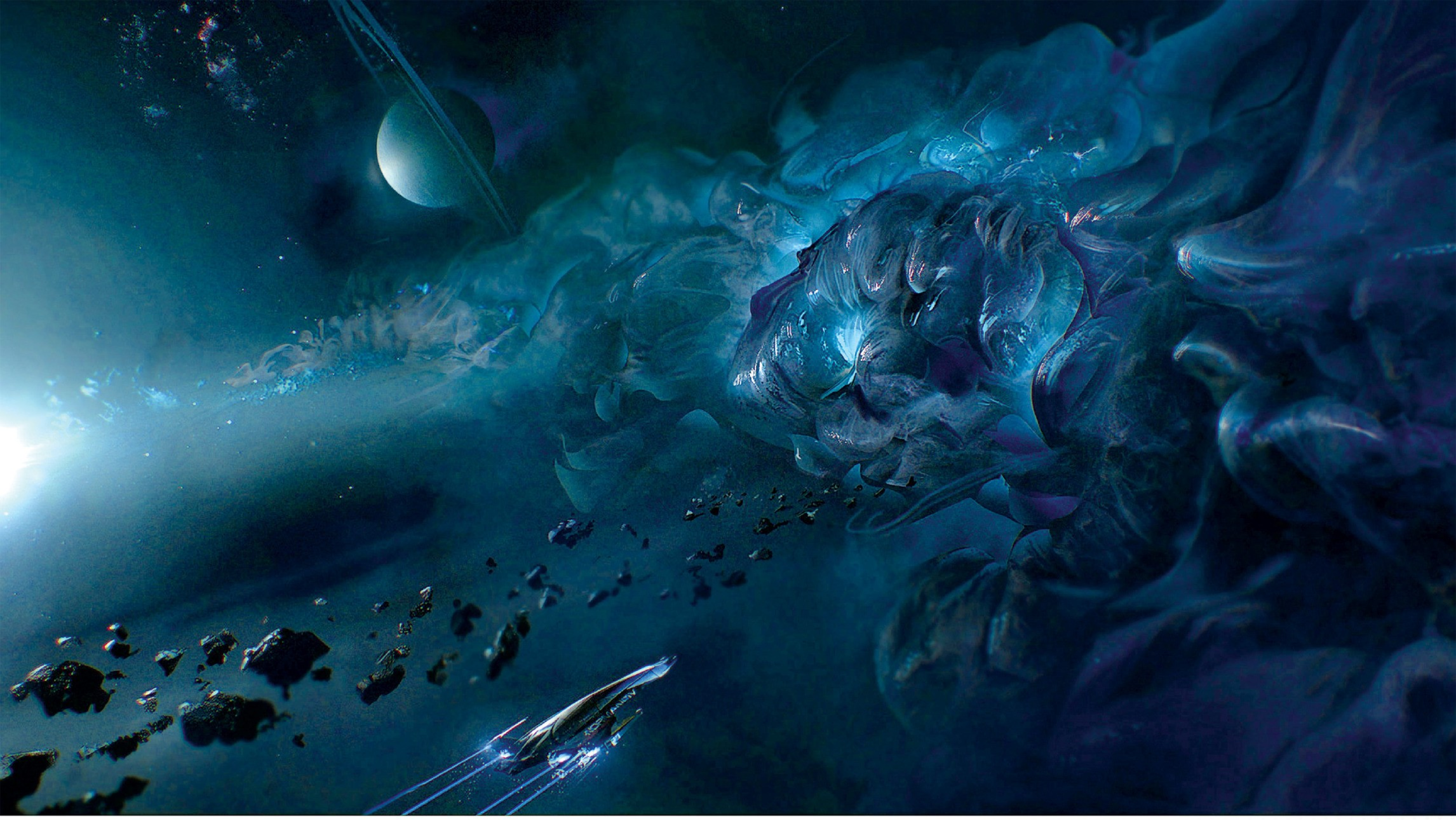
SB: It all started with a few geometric shapes drawn on paper—a rectangle for the Milky Way architecture, a tall triangle for the kett, a trapezoid for the Remnant, and a circle for the angara. These shapes helped define what we see today in our architecture.

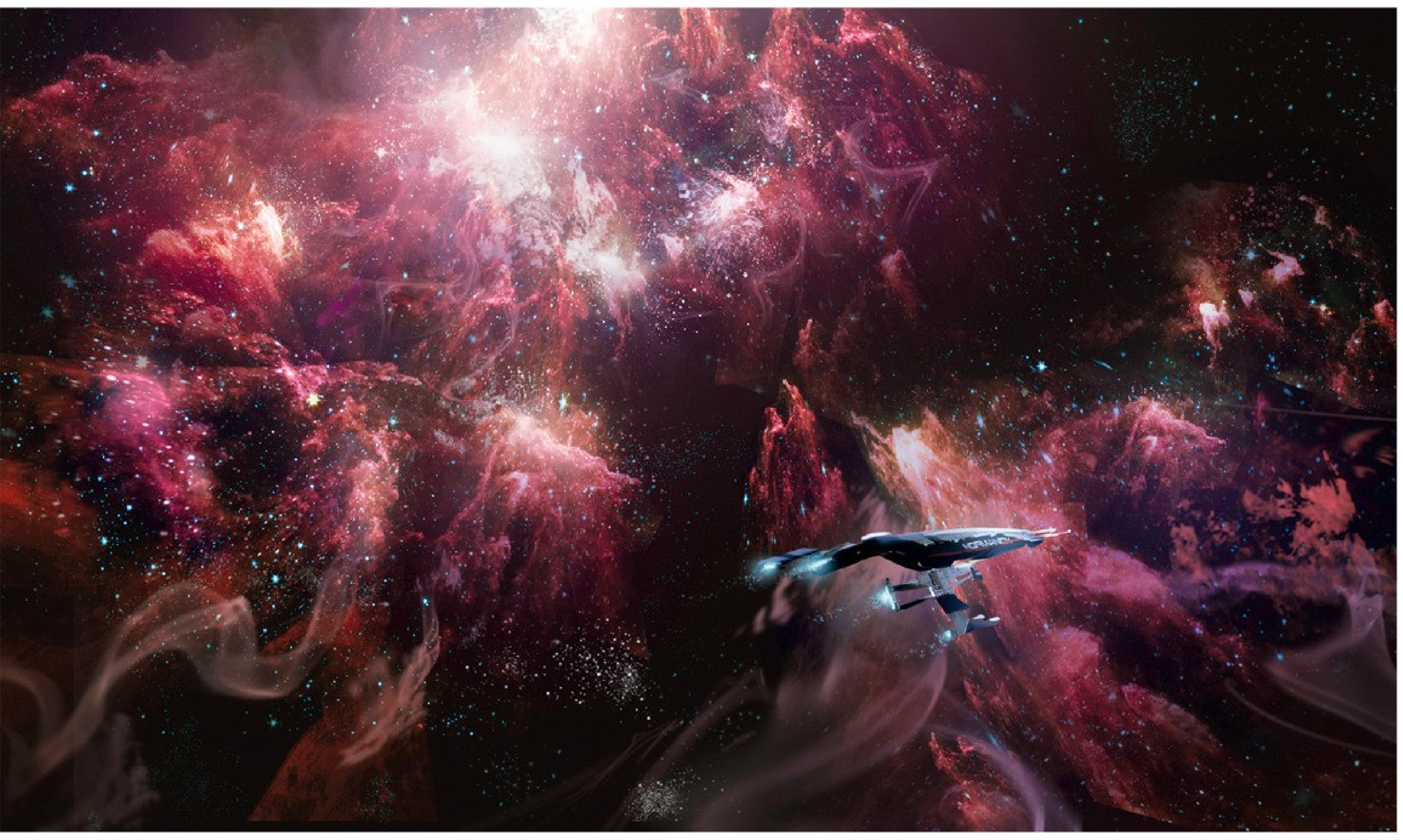


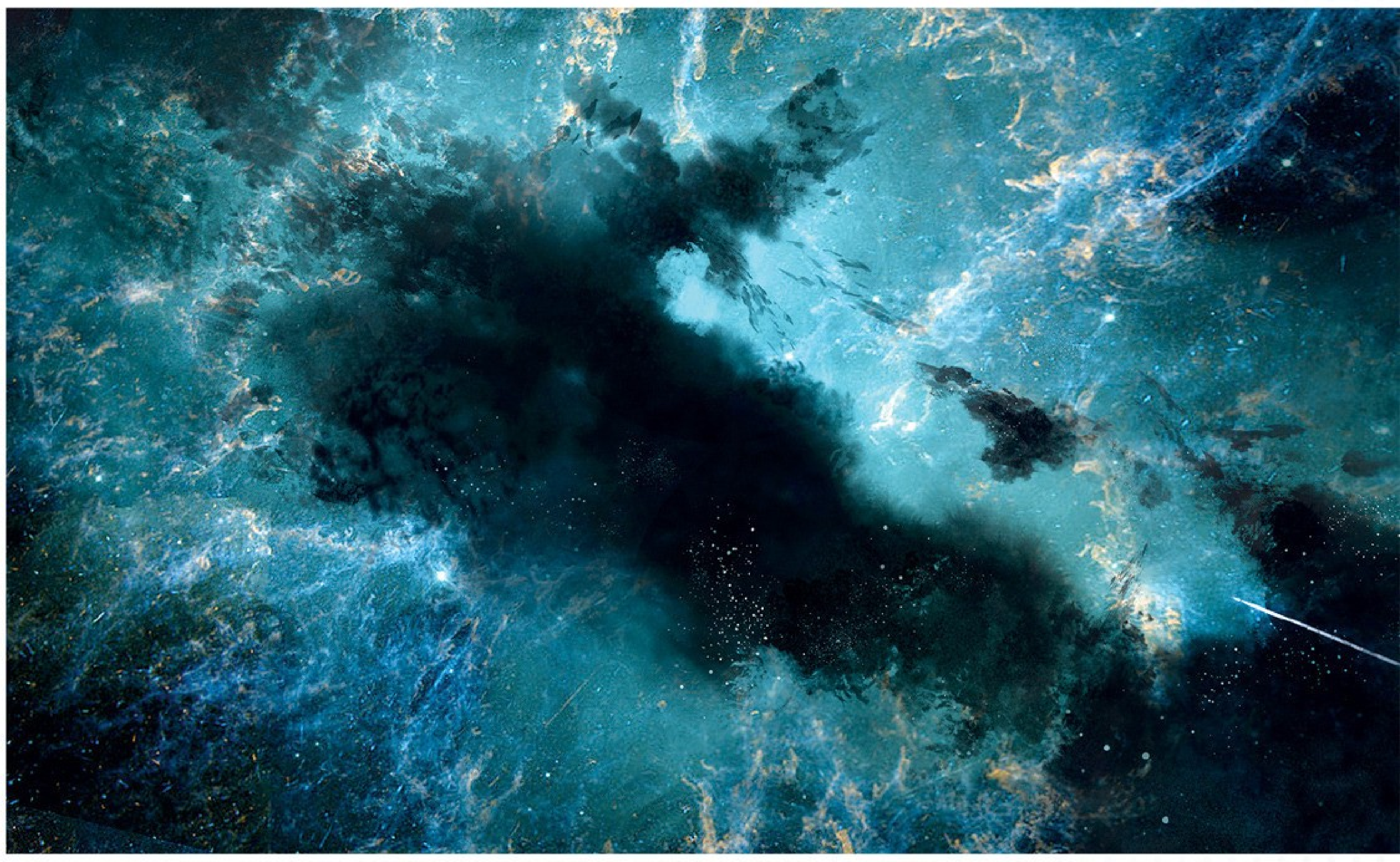
Noel Lukasewich: It was important for us to maintain the *Mass Effect* style in our new architecture palettes while still trying to push the epic scale and a sense of wonder.

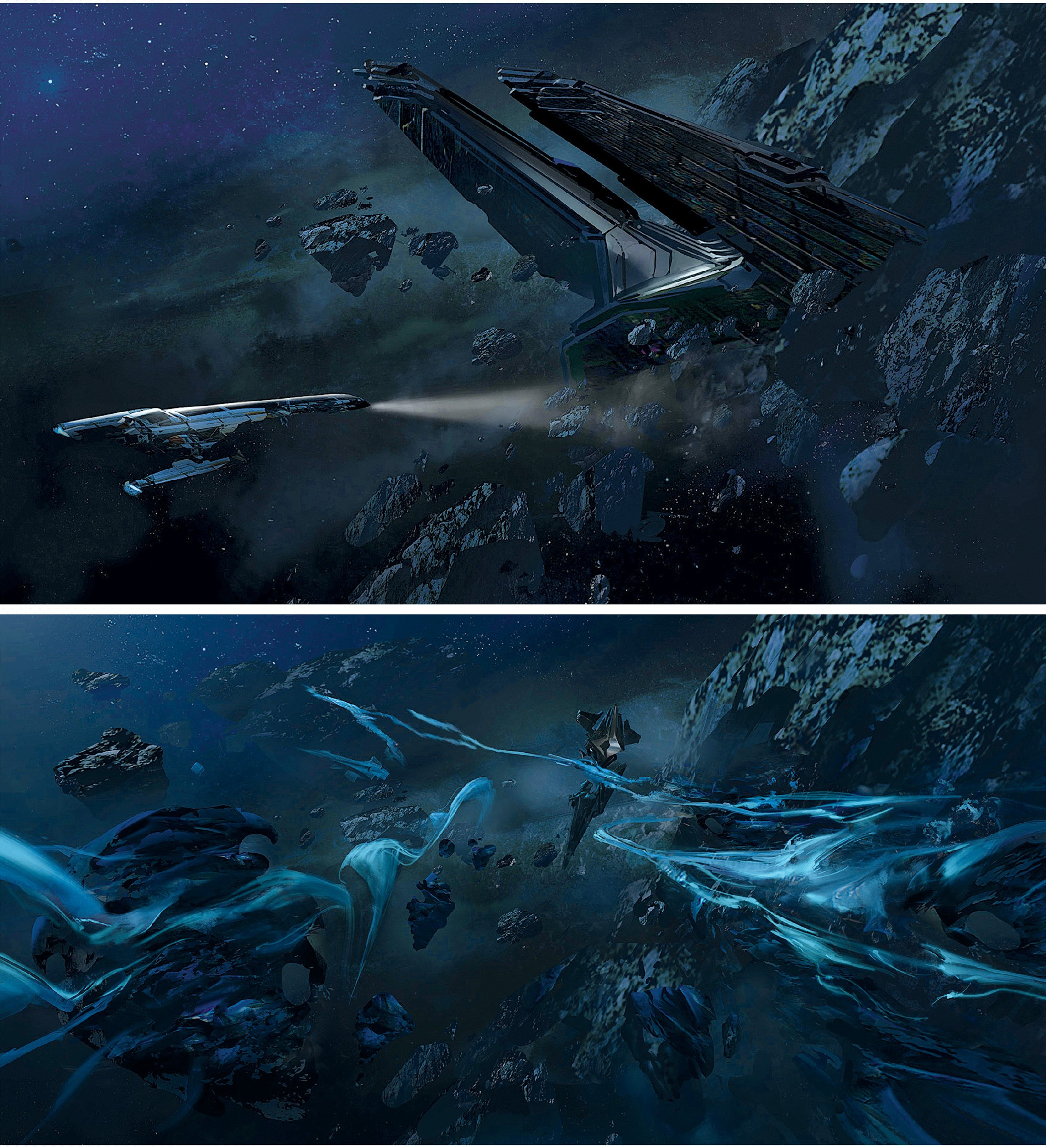


BL: Space was a big part of our project early on. Working on the space concepts was one of the most fun and enjoyable parts of the project. The task was to create something that will capture the awe-inspiring feeling of space exploration—places that will make you want to go and visit.

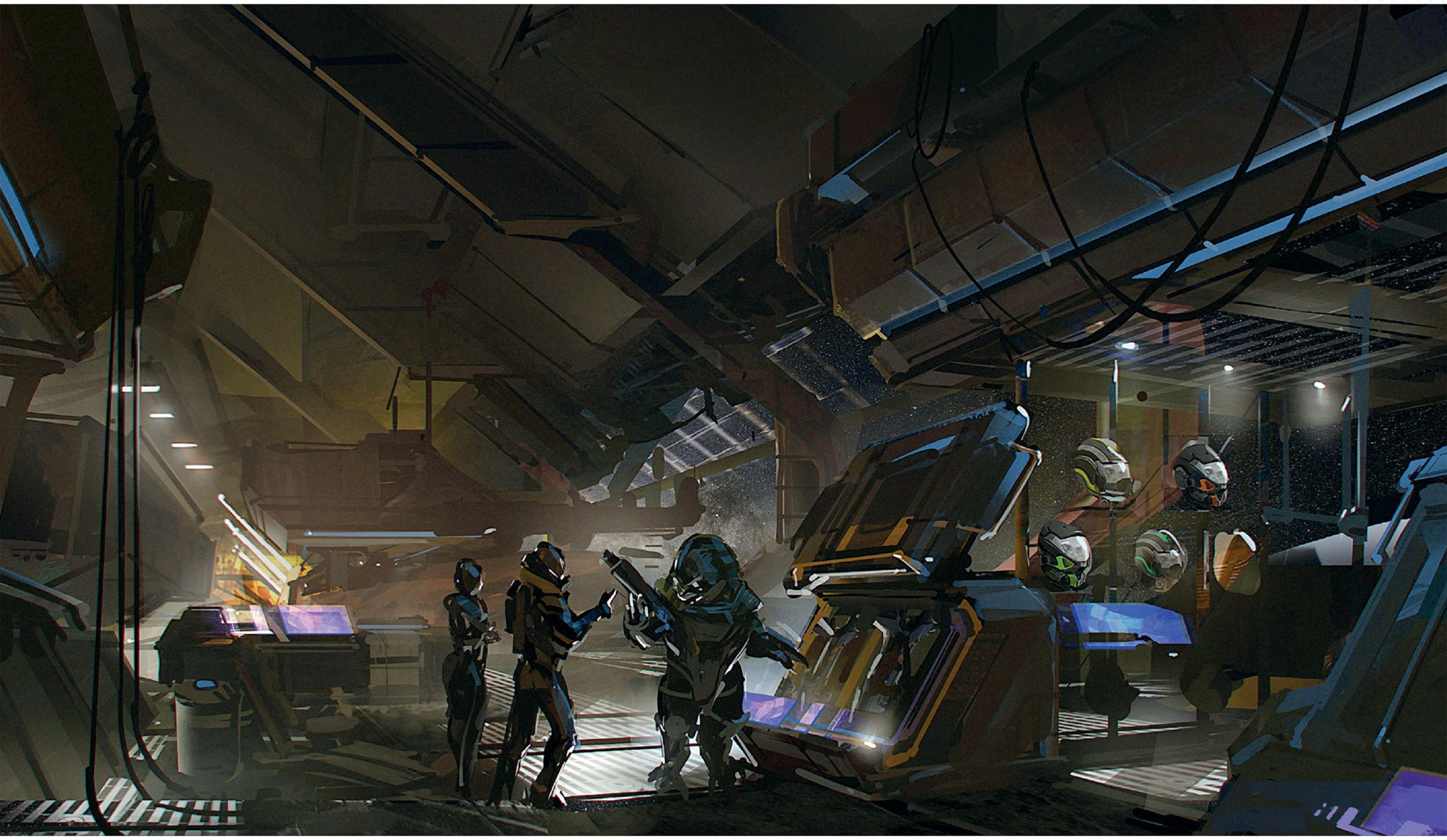


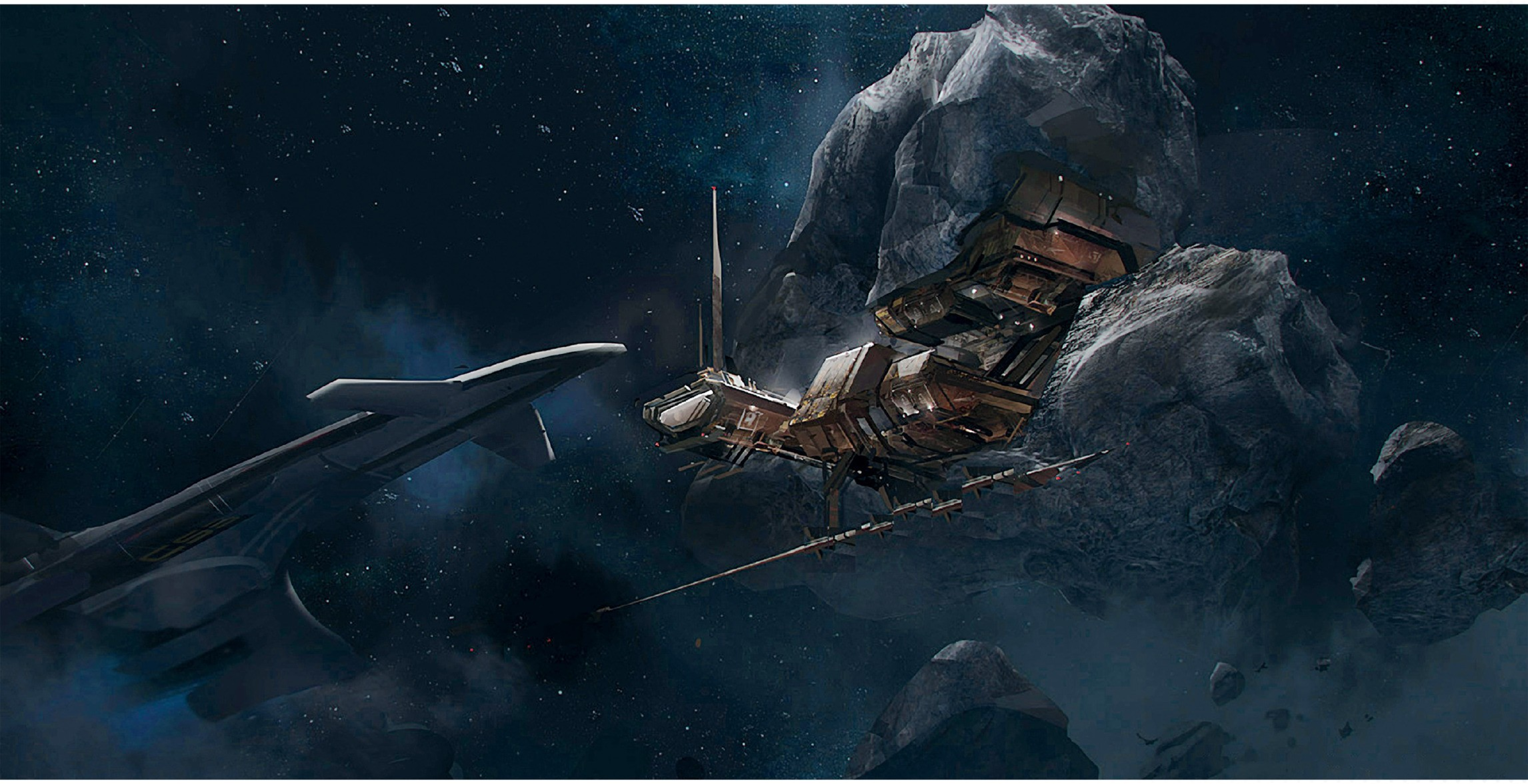




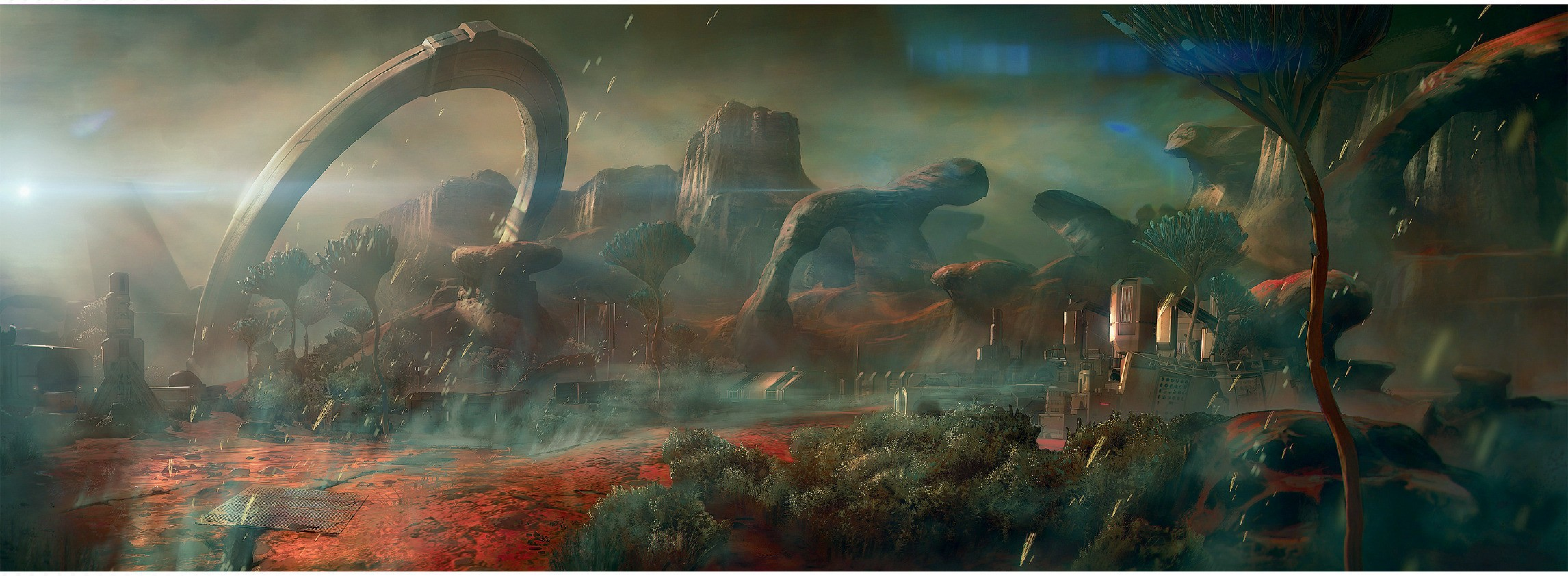


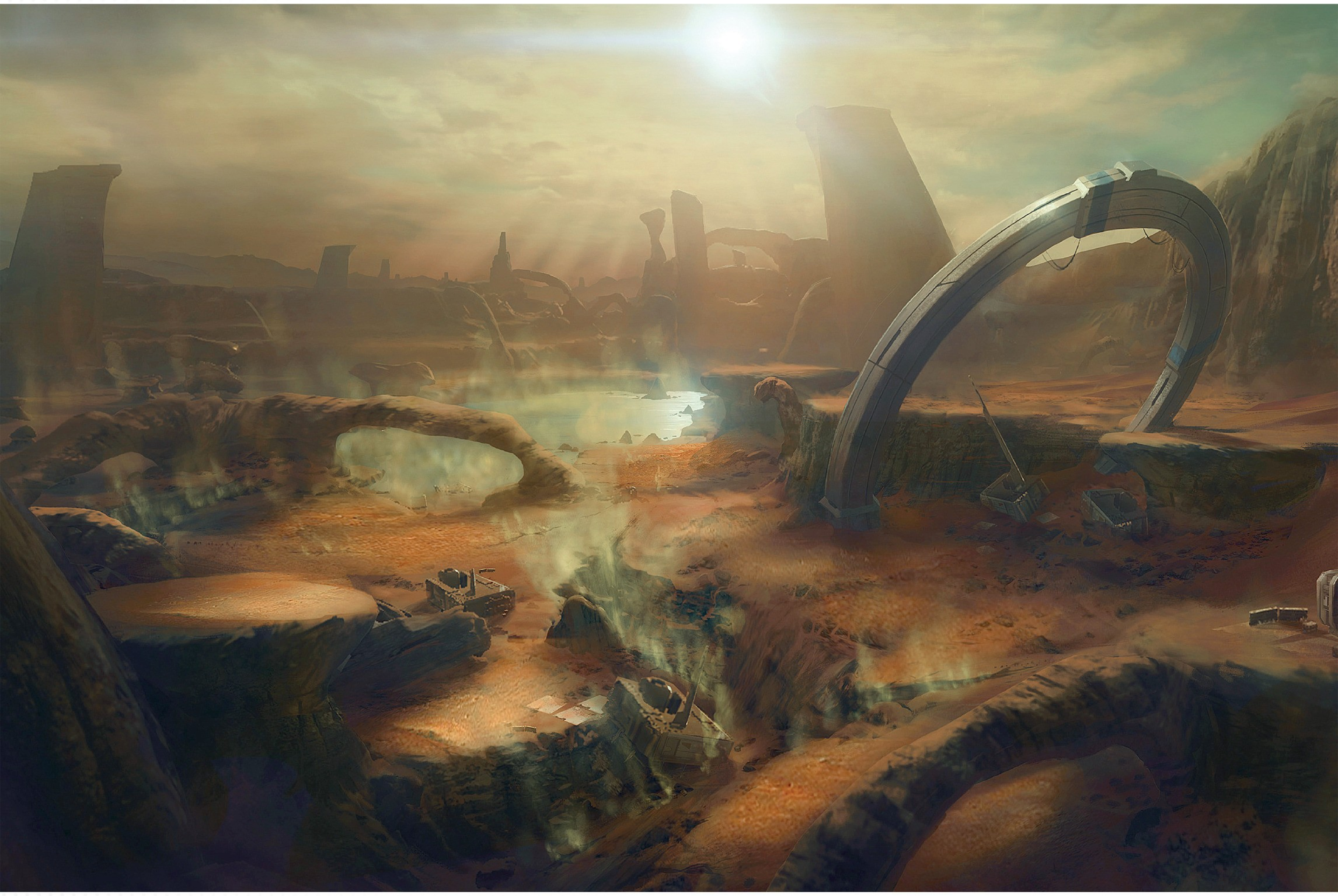
JM: The Remnant are an enigmatic group. We wanted to develop ideas, designs, and activities that would evoke a sense of mystery around them . . . even in space.





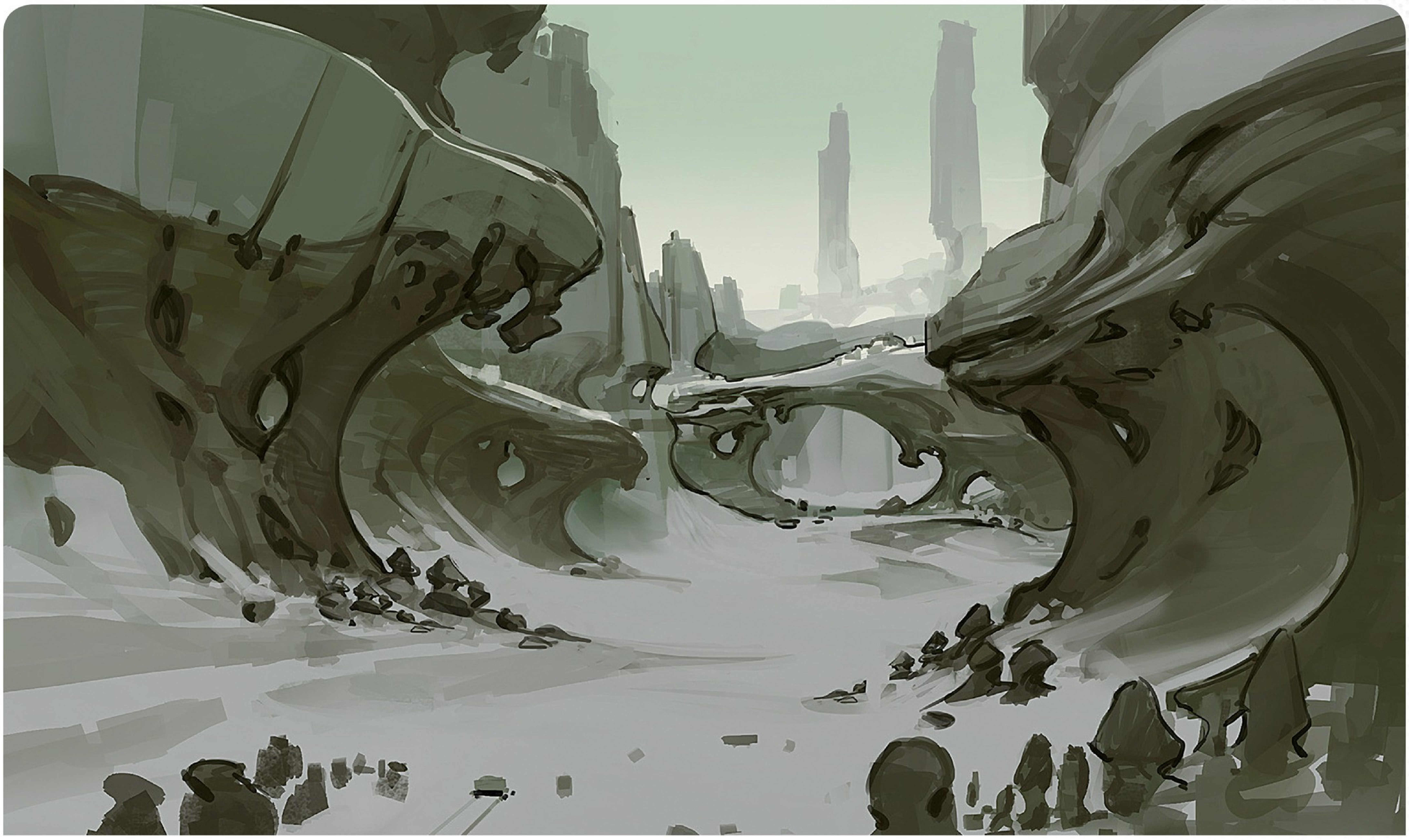
JM: The krogan are a resilient race—they can thrive just about anywhere. This is an early idea of what a krogan trading outpost would look like, comfortably built into the side of an asteroid.

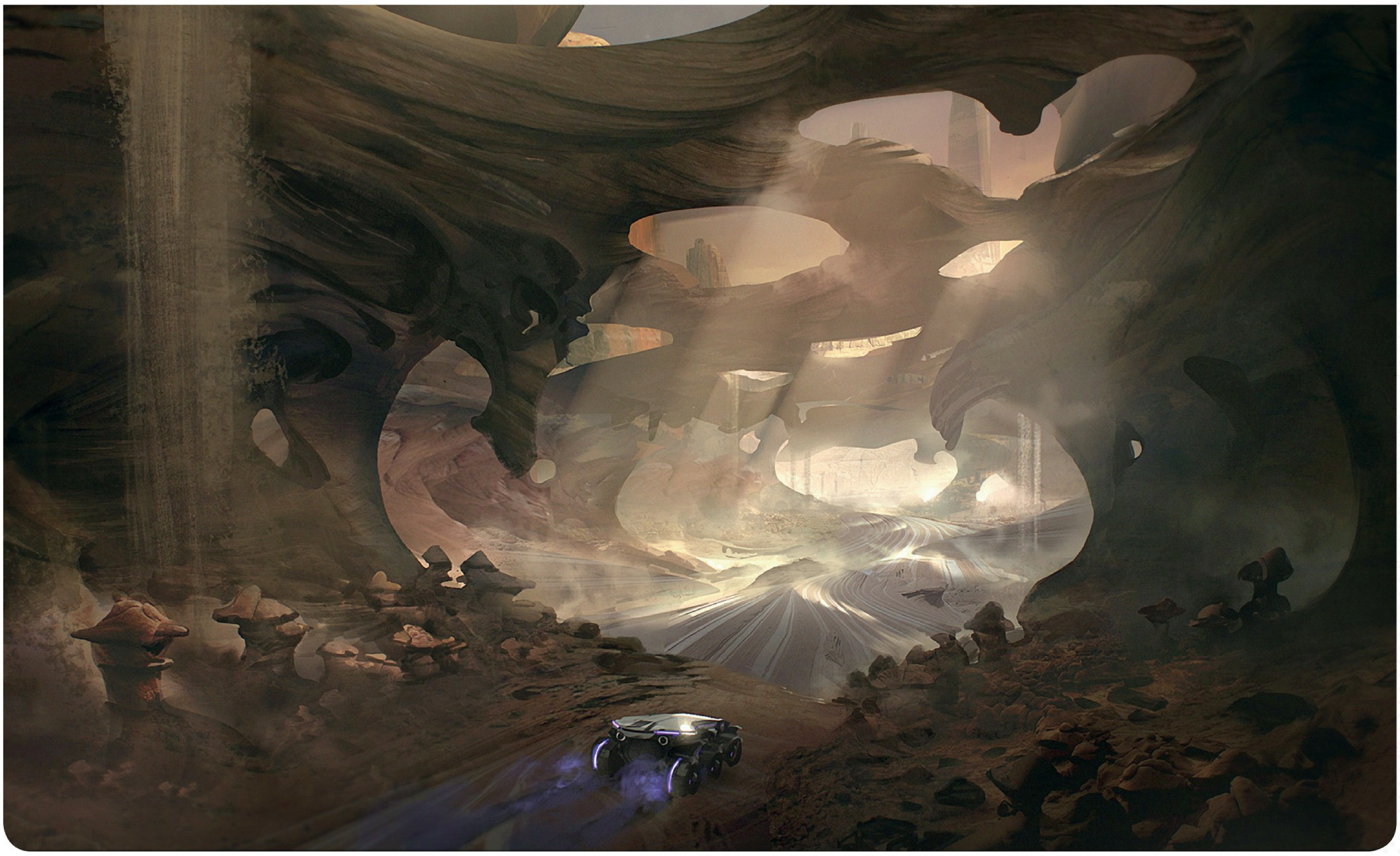




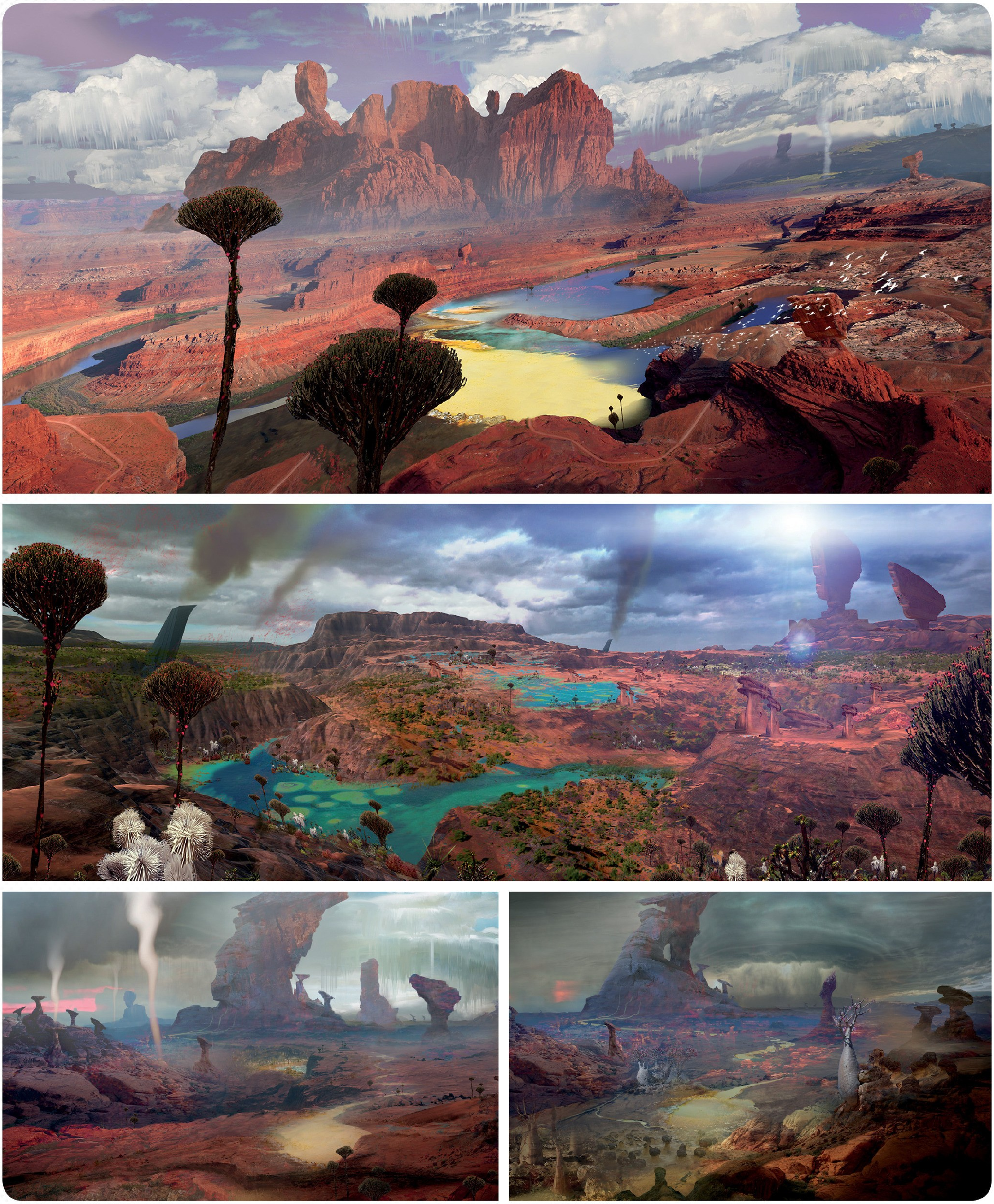
EOS

JM: Because Eos is our first uncharted world, we went through a couple of narrative and thematic revisions in order to make sure it delivered the proper engaging experience. The theme we landed on was an irradiated planet, with fissures and geysers releasing radioactive spores and motes into the air. The seismic turbulence that produced these fissures was also responsible for the dilapidated state of some of the architecture and landmarks.

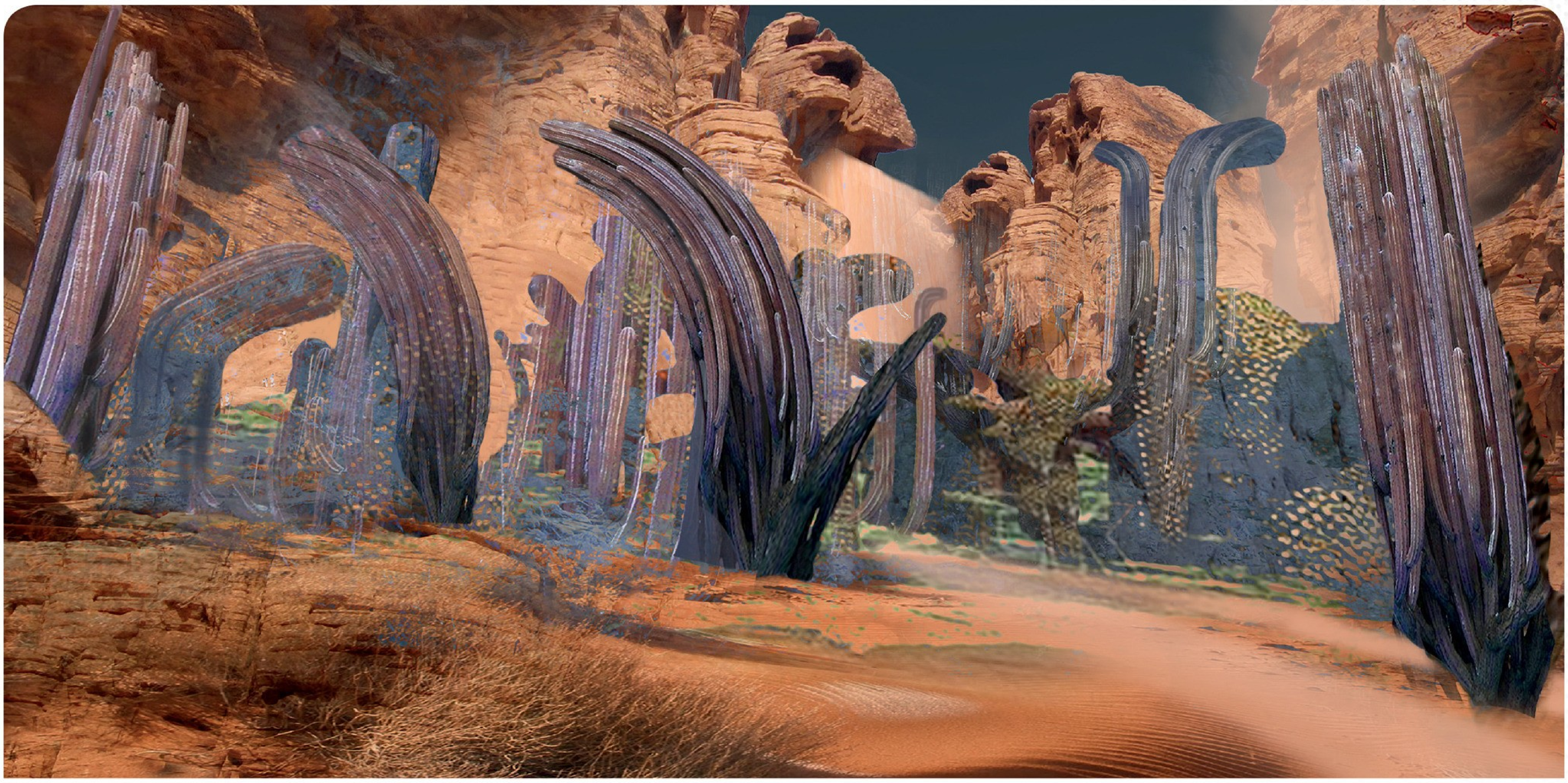


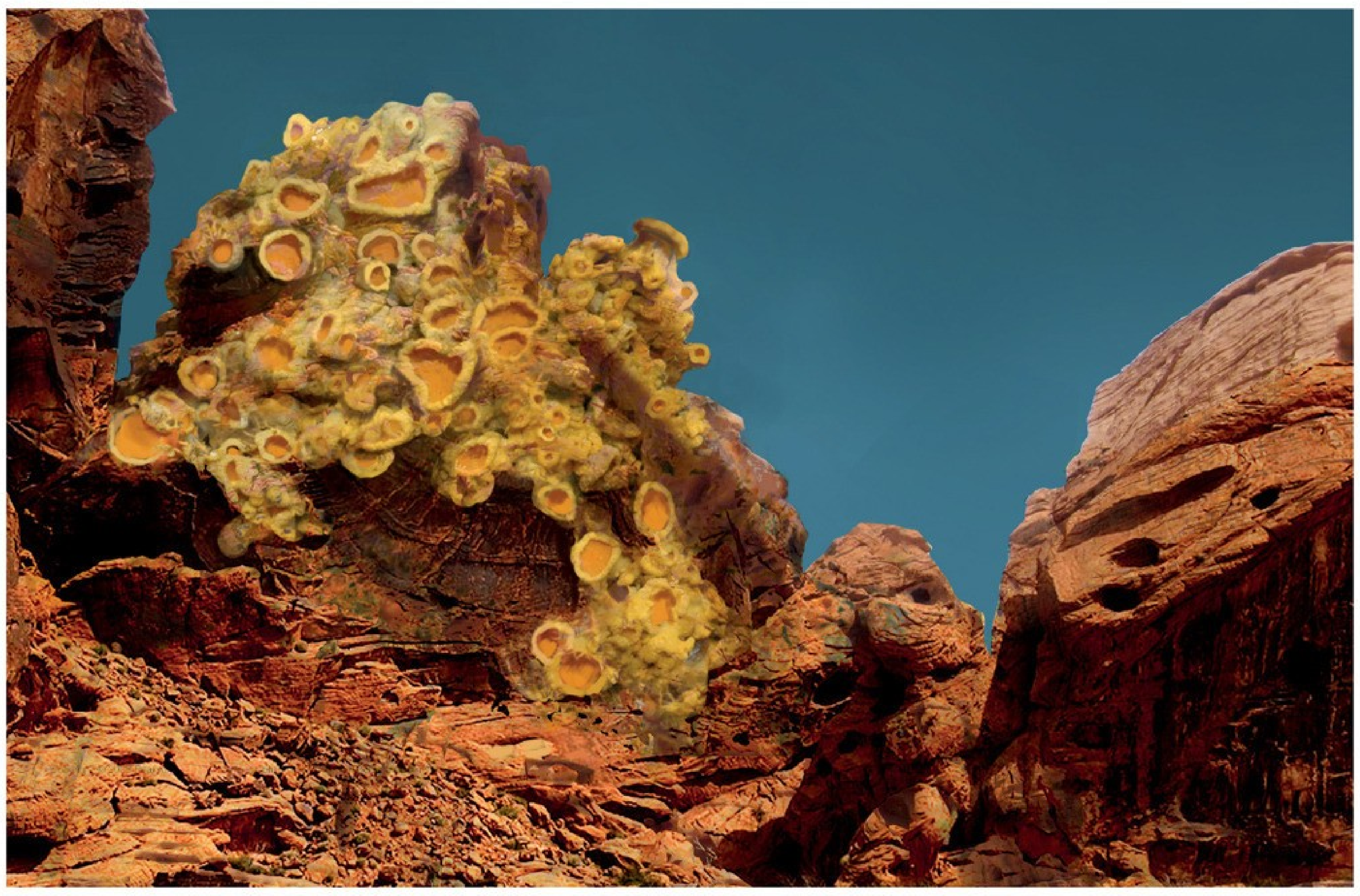


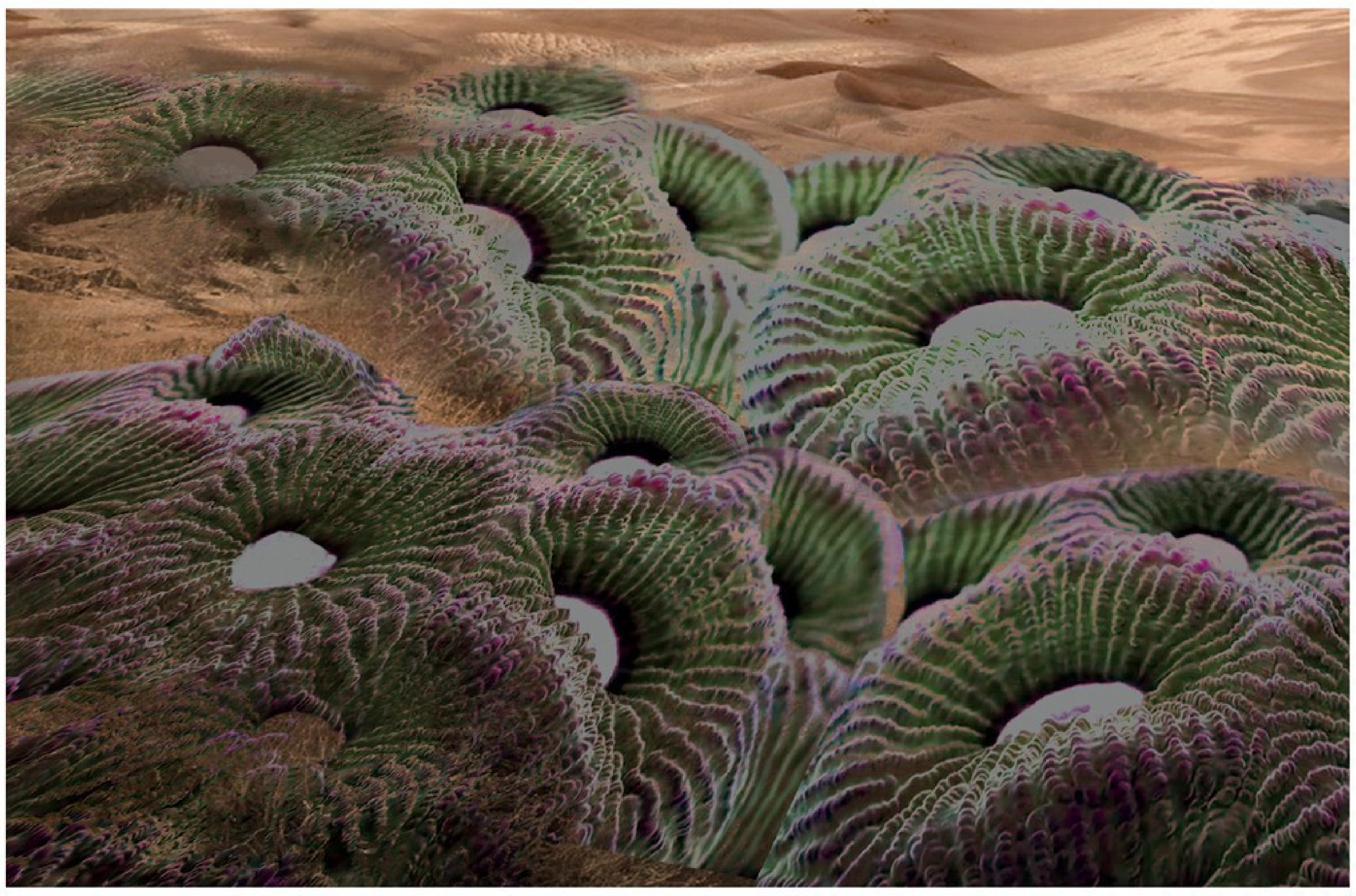
KF: Eos went through many changes to reach its final look. Many of the early versions tried to find the right balance between beautiful and deadly. All of the locations in *Mass Effect: Andromeda* feature some form of biological or geological hazard, and each time we tried something new on Eos, it would have an effect on the overall appearance of the environment.

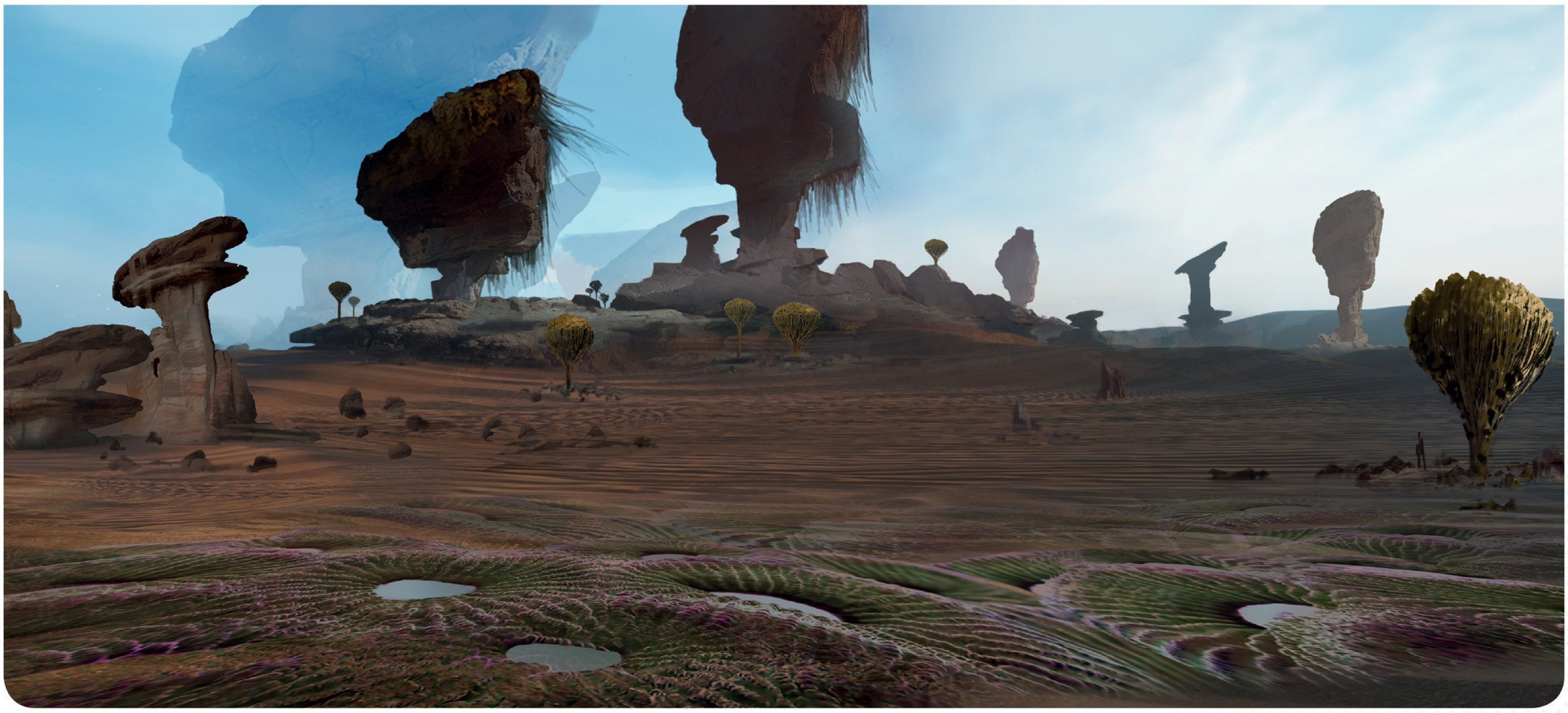


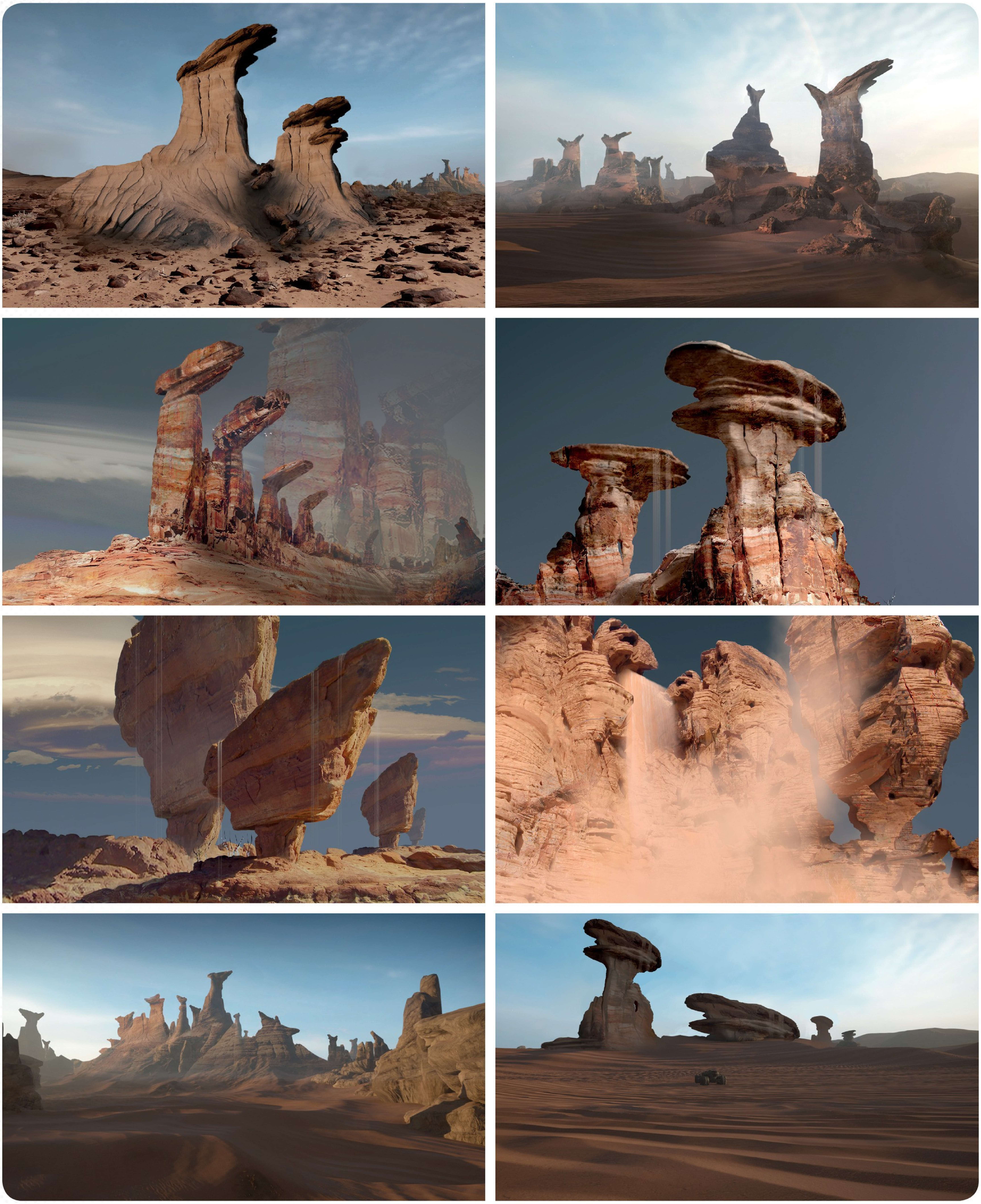
JM: This is some early exploration for our desert planets. We spent a significant amount of time trying to develop some believable alien foliage without falling in the trap of it looking too wacky and cartoon-like.



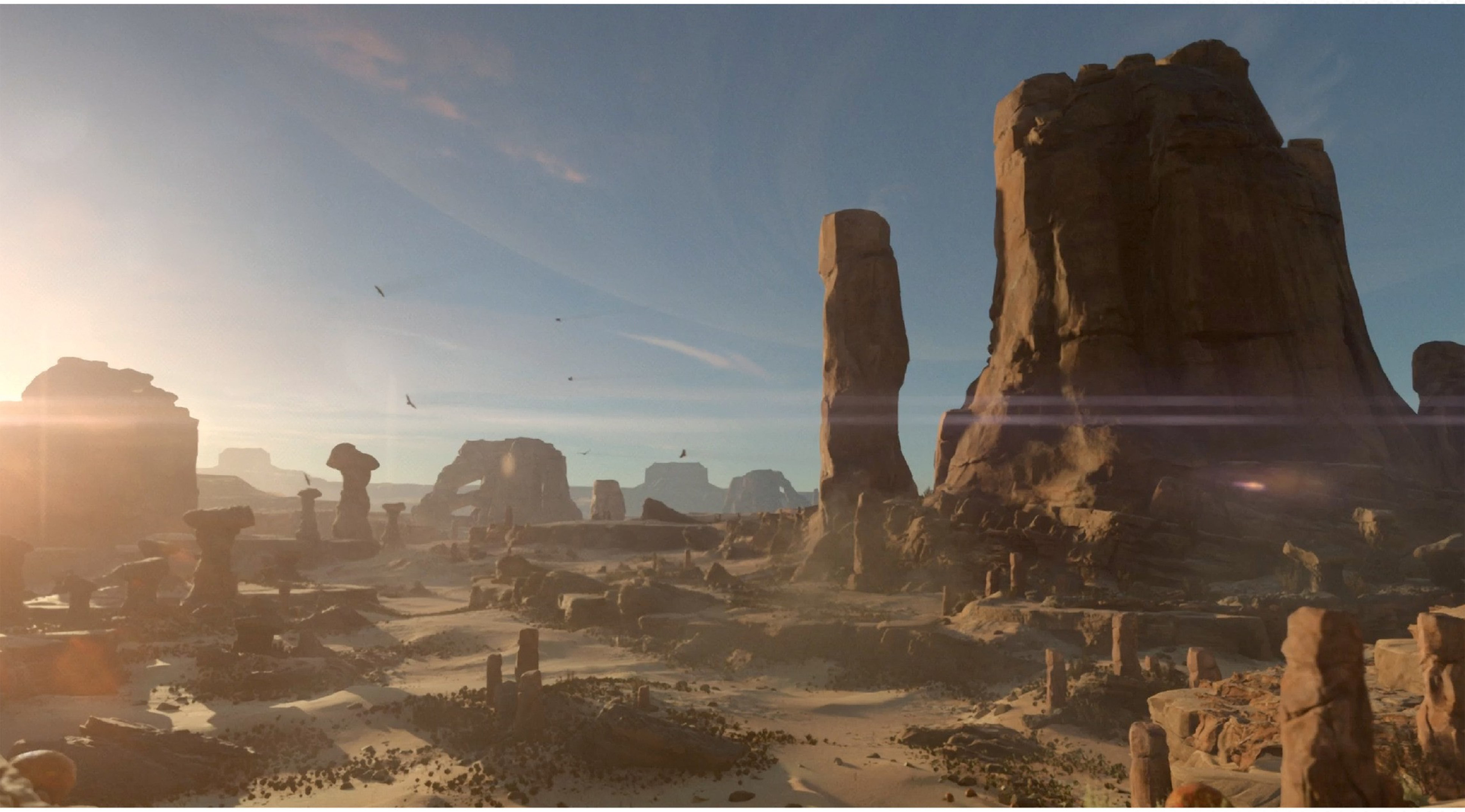


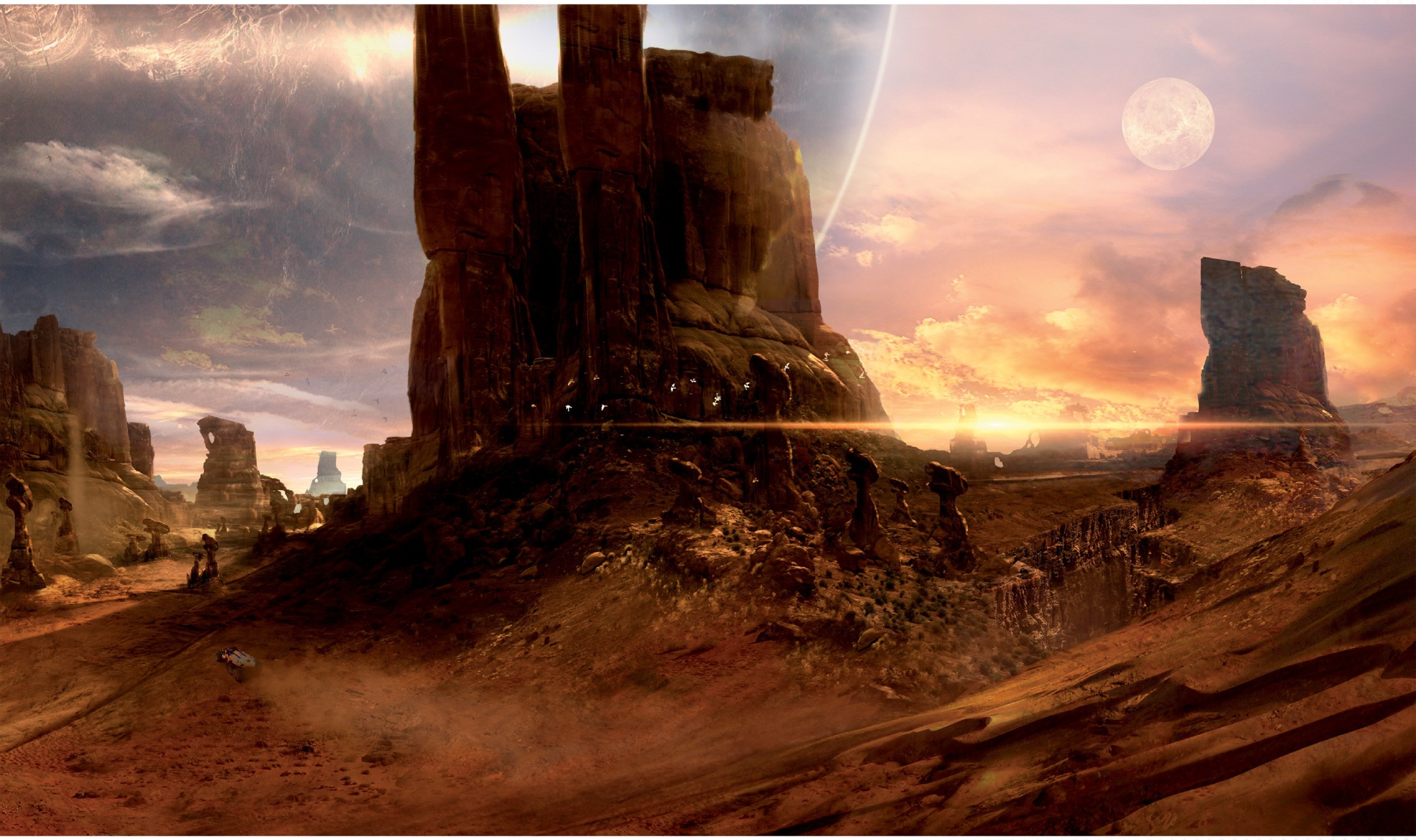


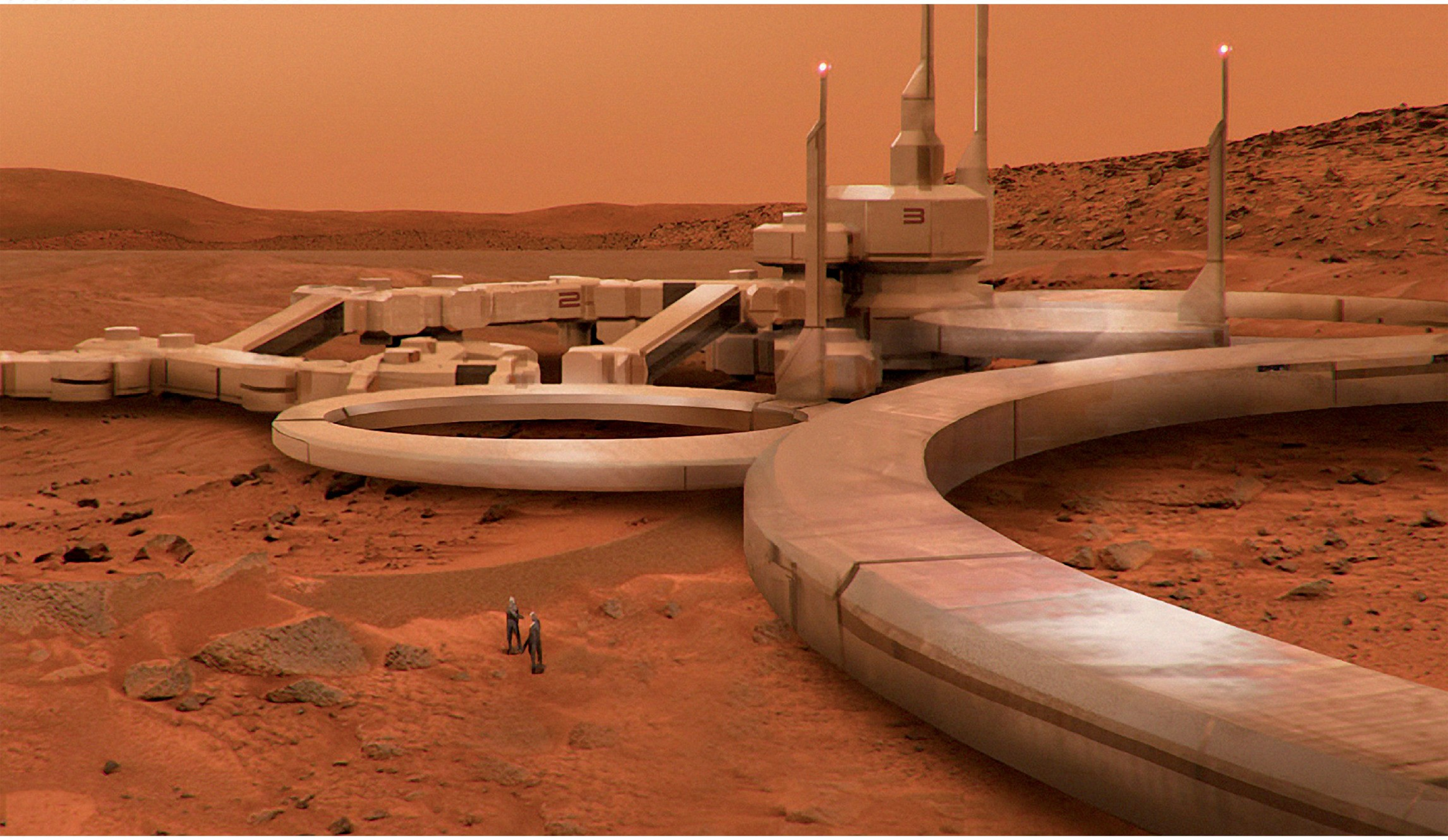


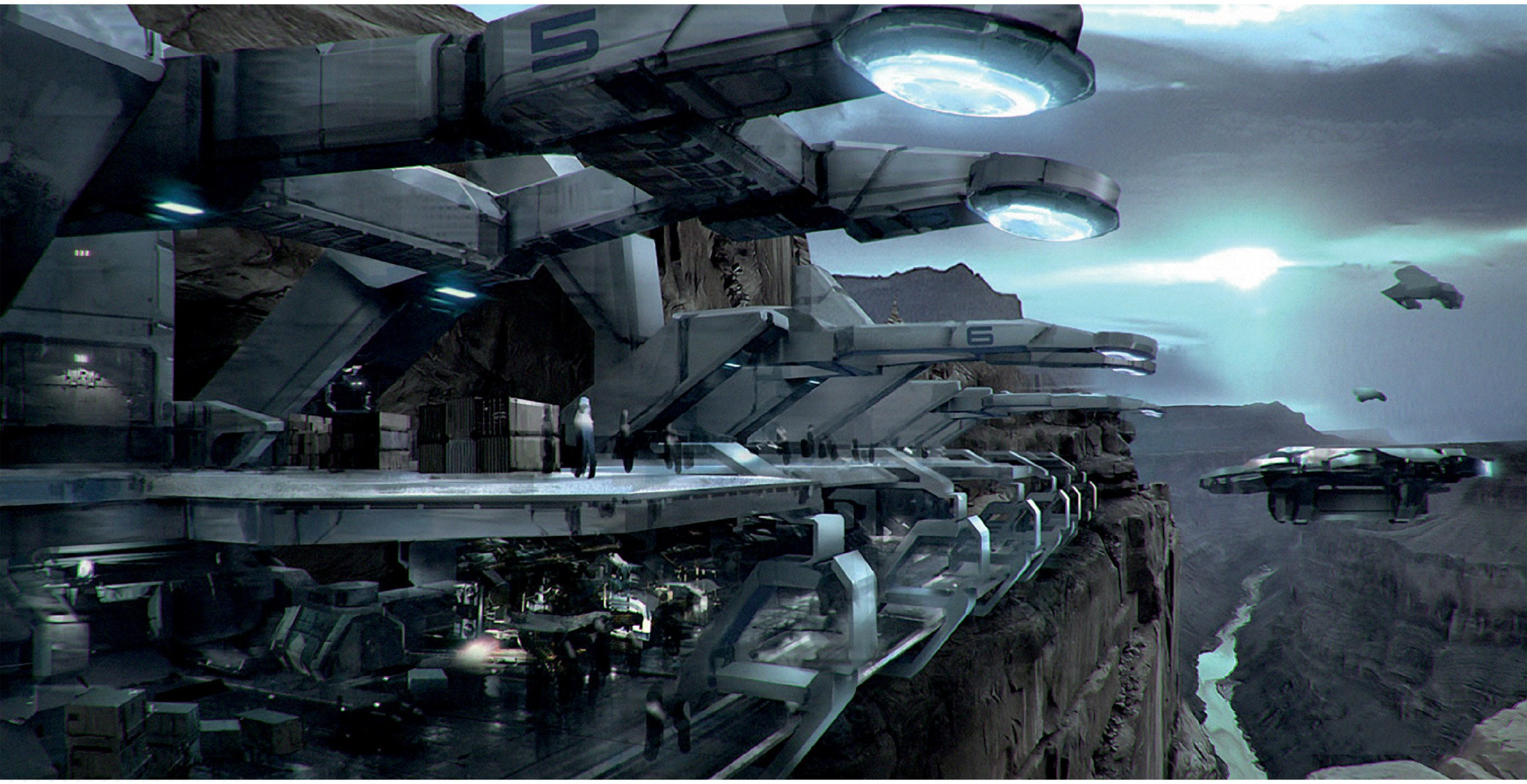


JM: These unique desert landmarks—like alien hoodoos—were developed to look believable, even slightly familiar, and to add a decent sense of scale to the environment.

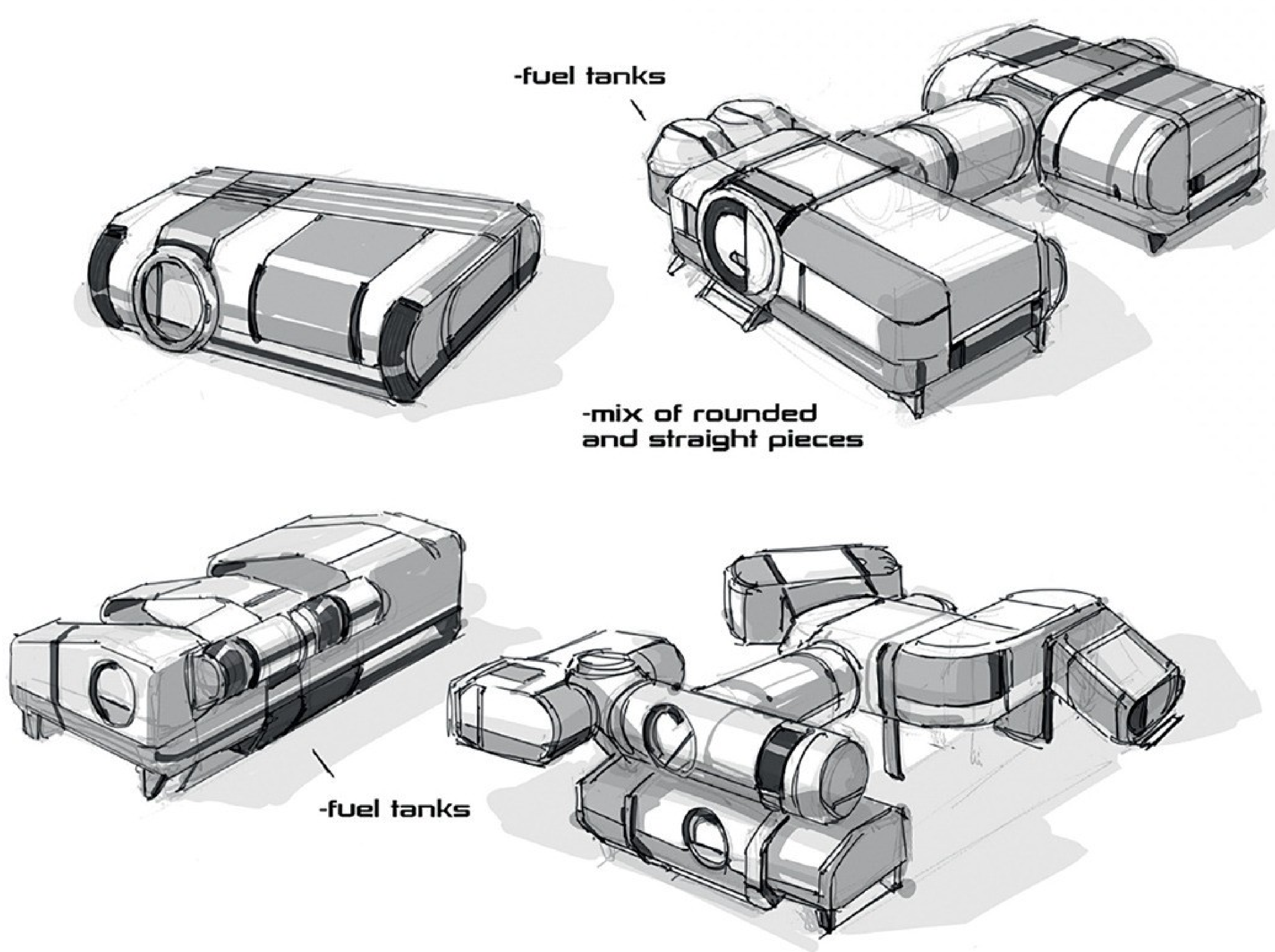


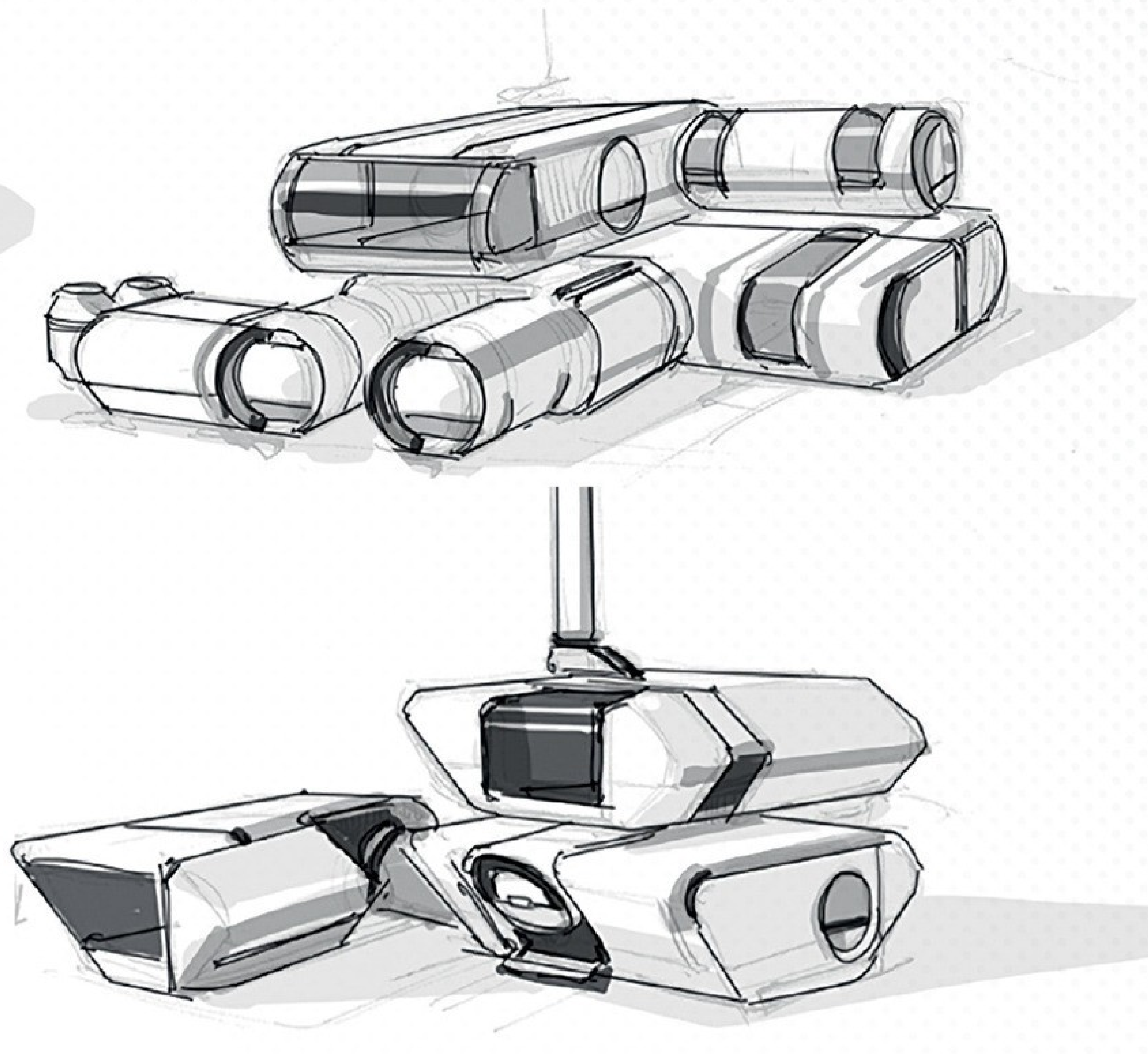


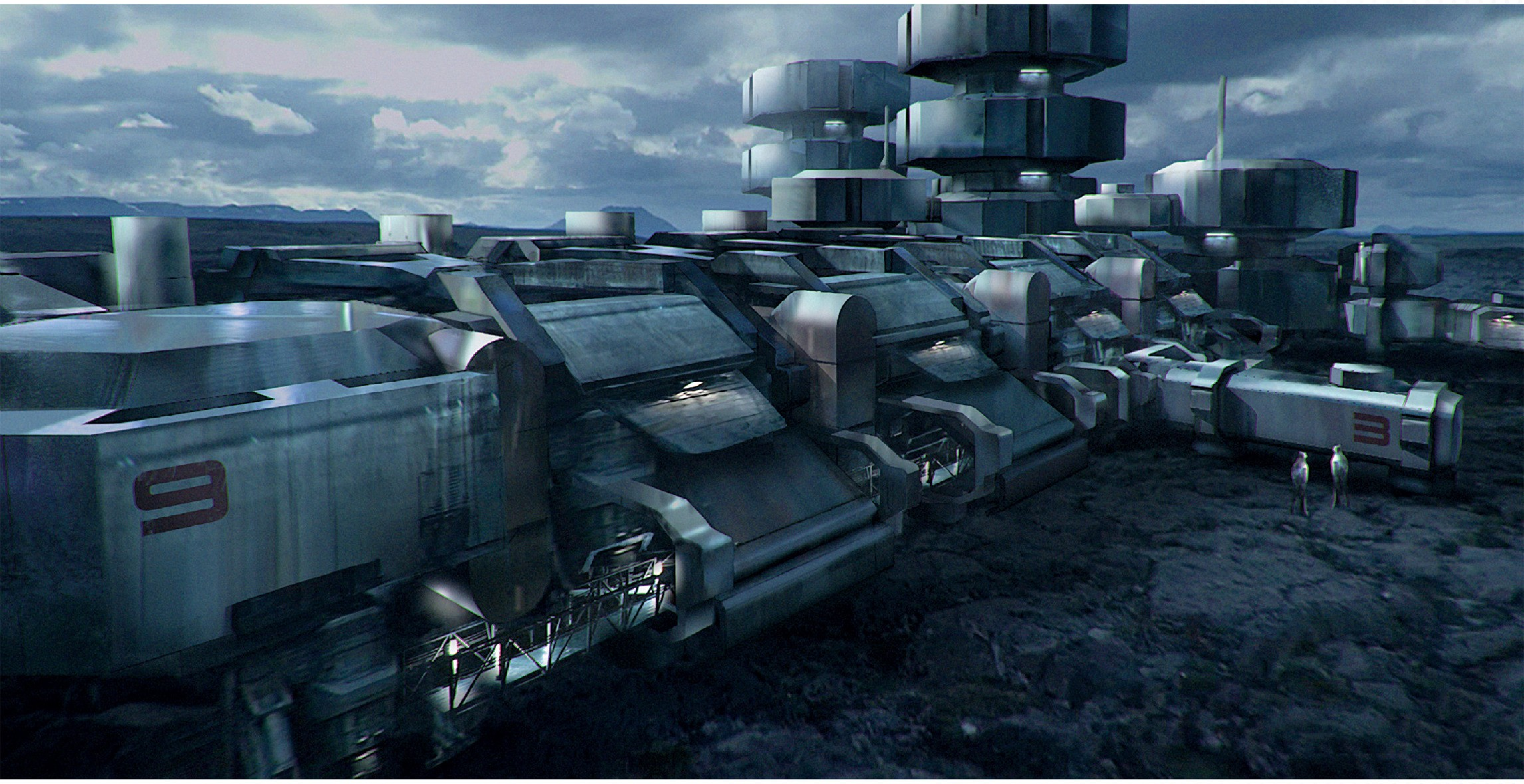




JM: These are various designs for our Milky Way outpost layouts. These outposts would need to be versatile enough to be built among a variety of terrain types, but also able to stand against different weather hazards and any unknown confrontations. Essentially, they were built to last.


-fuel tanks
-mix of rounded
and straight pieces
-fuel tanks

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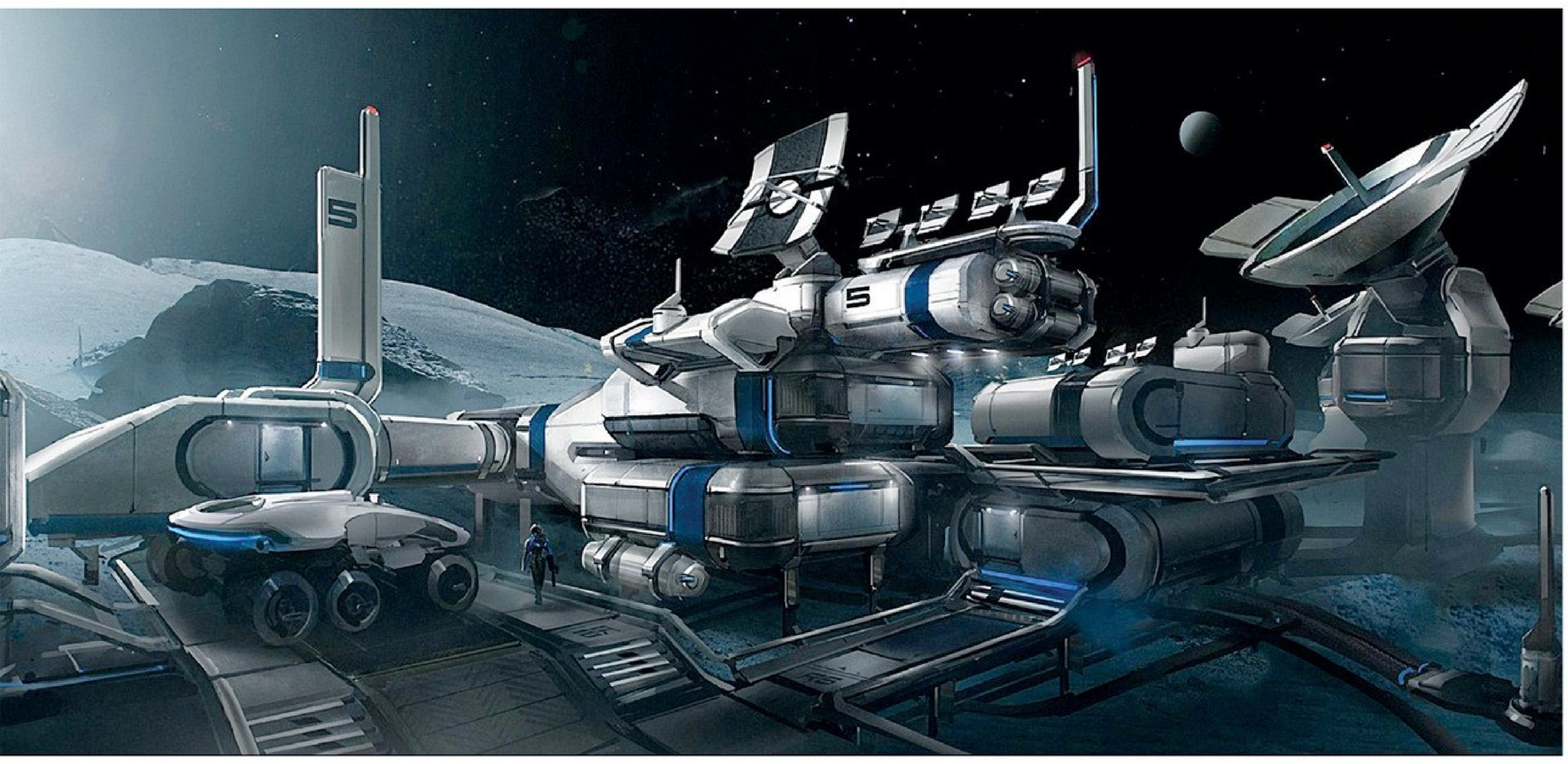
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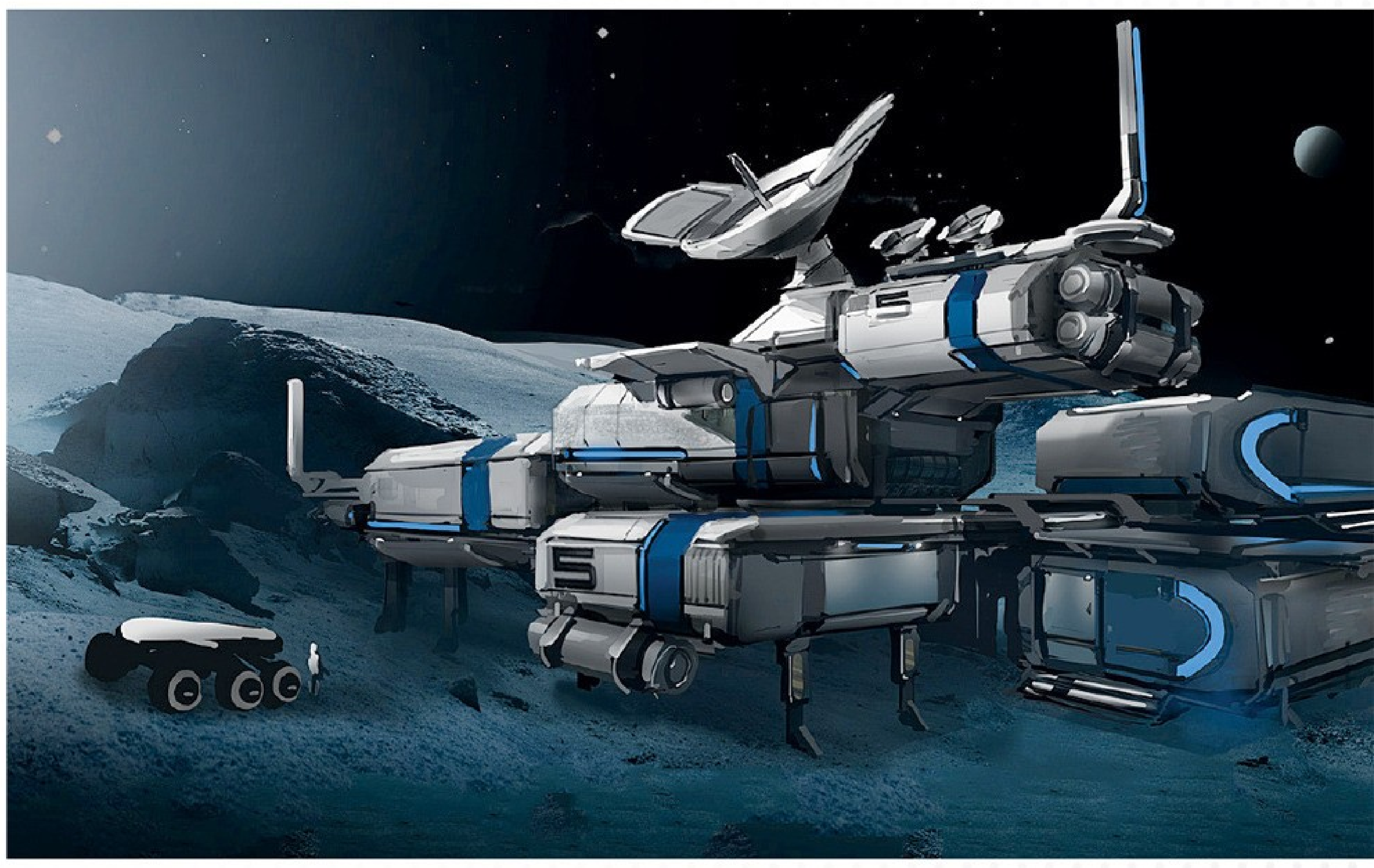
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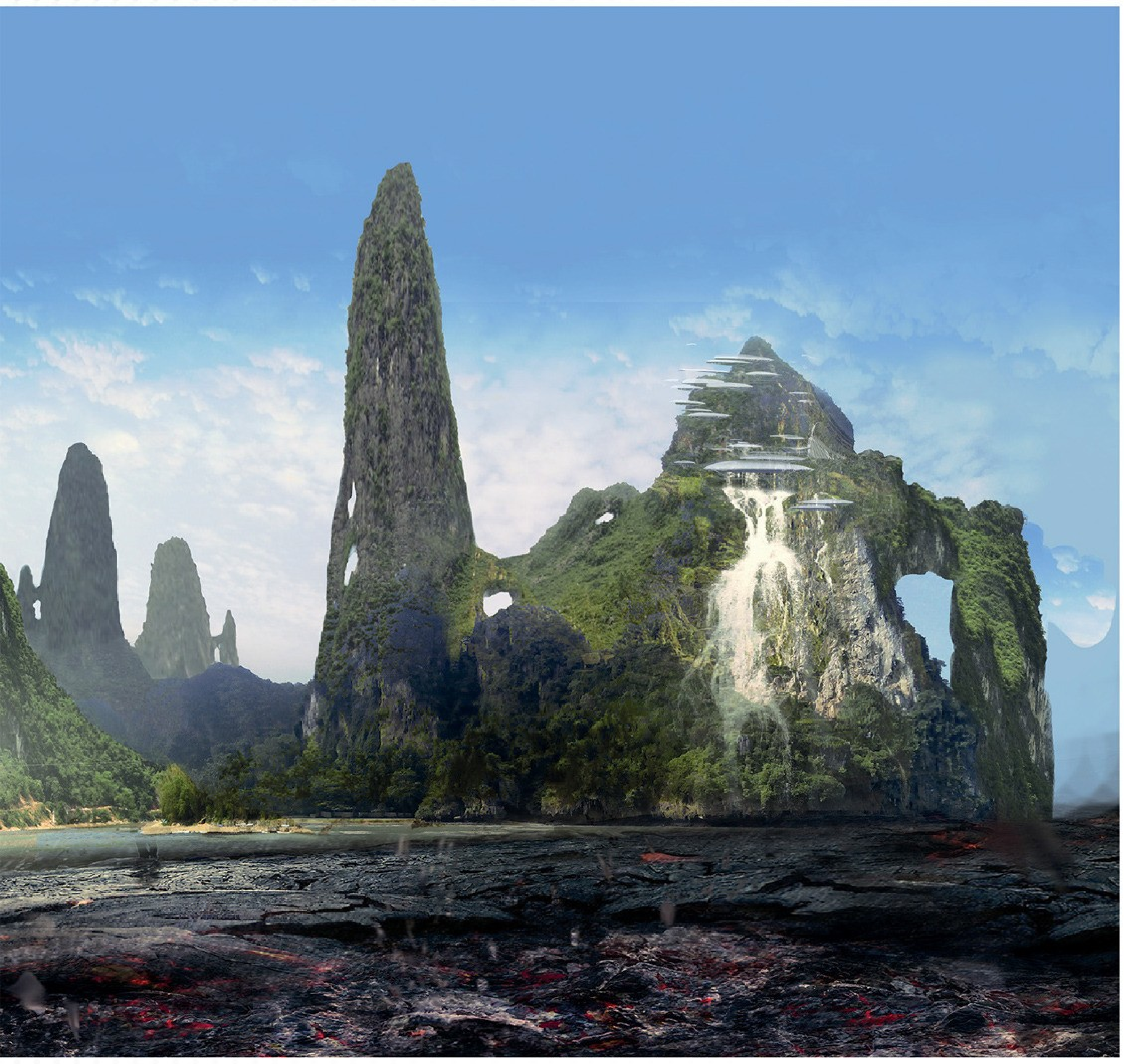
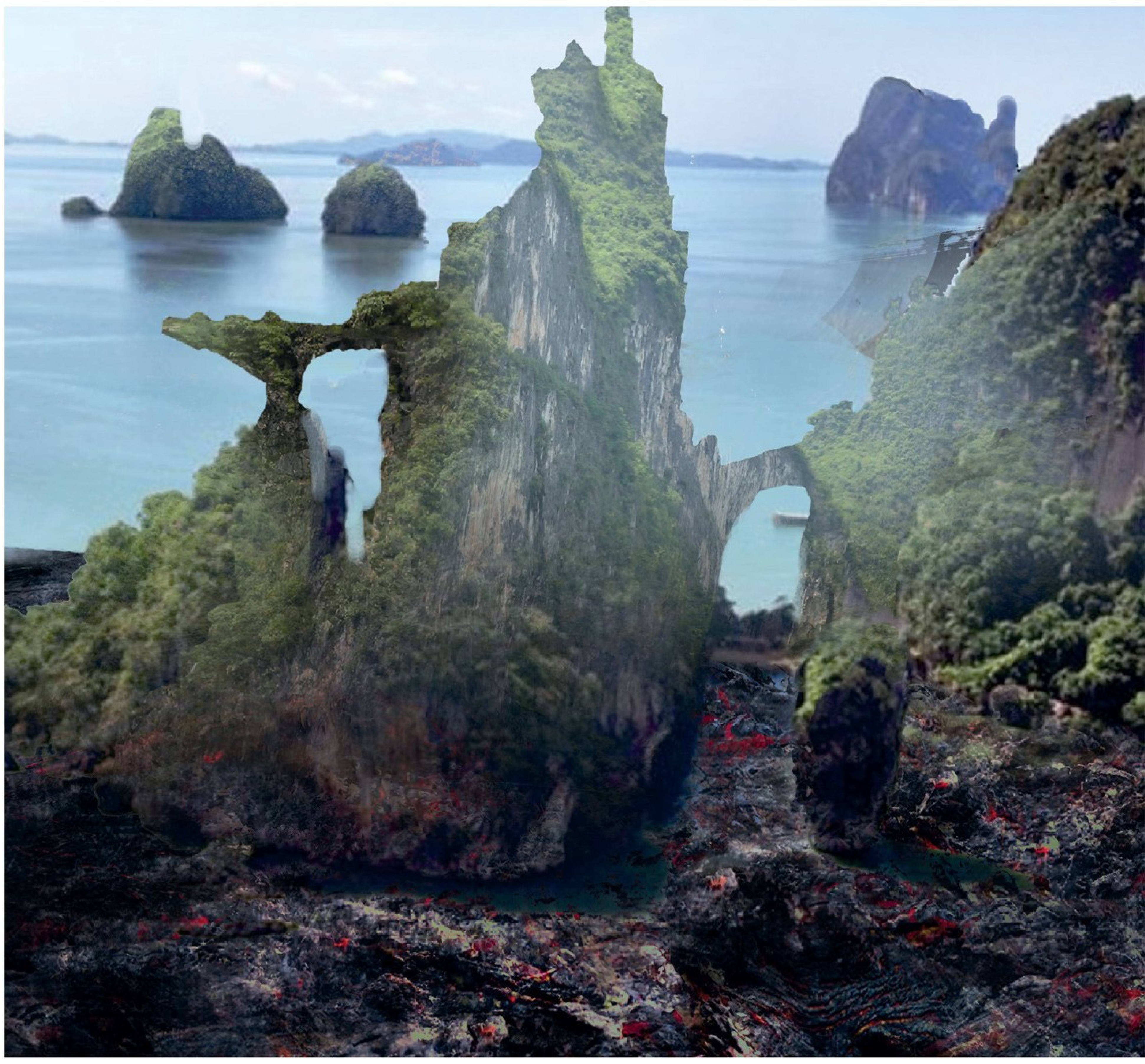
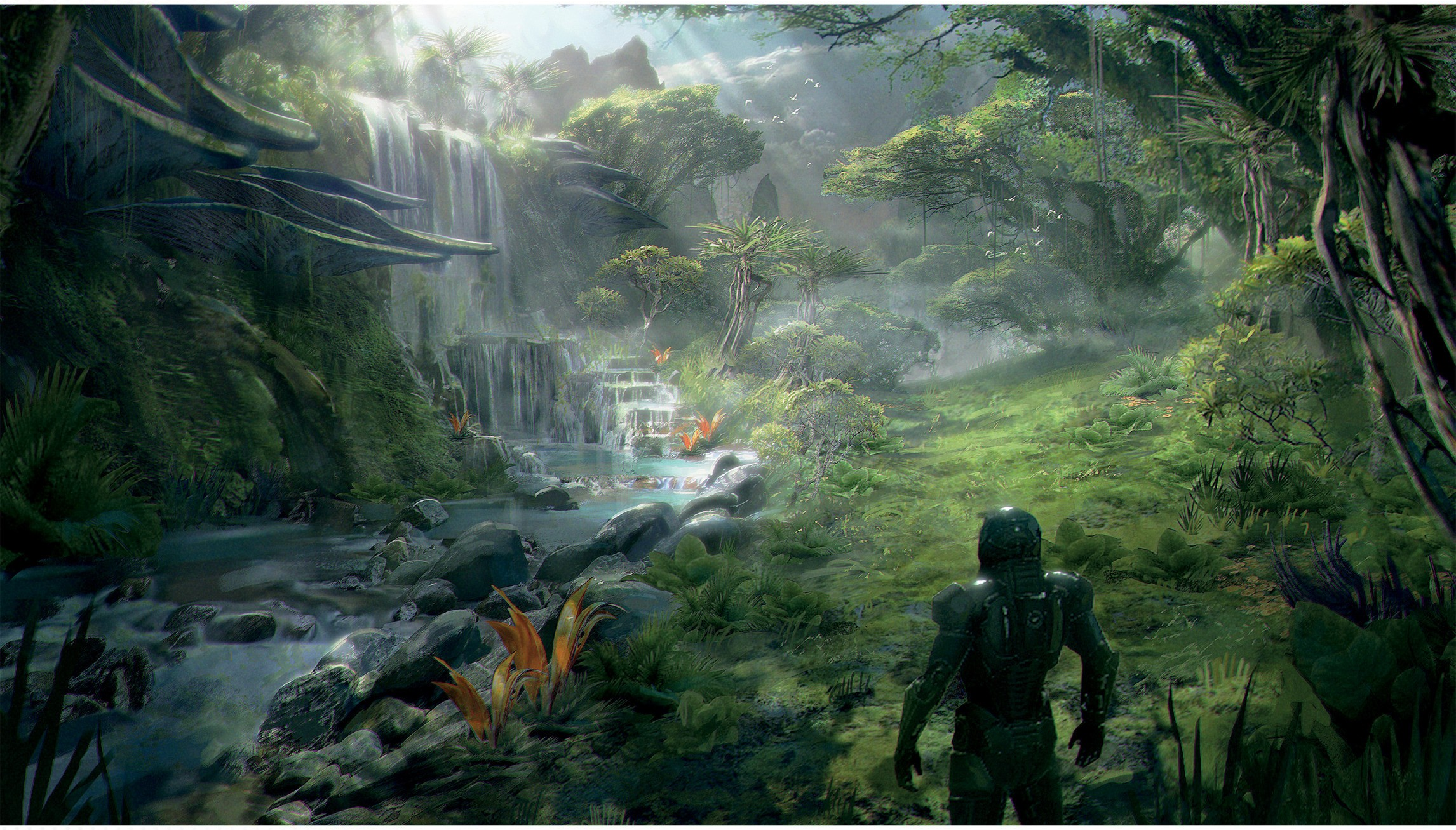
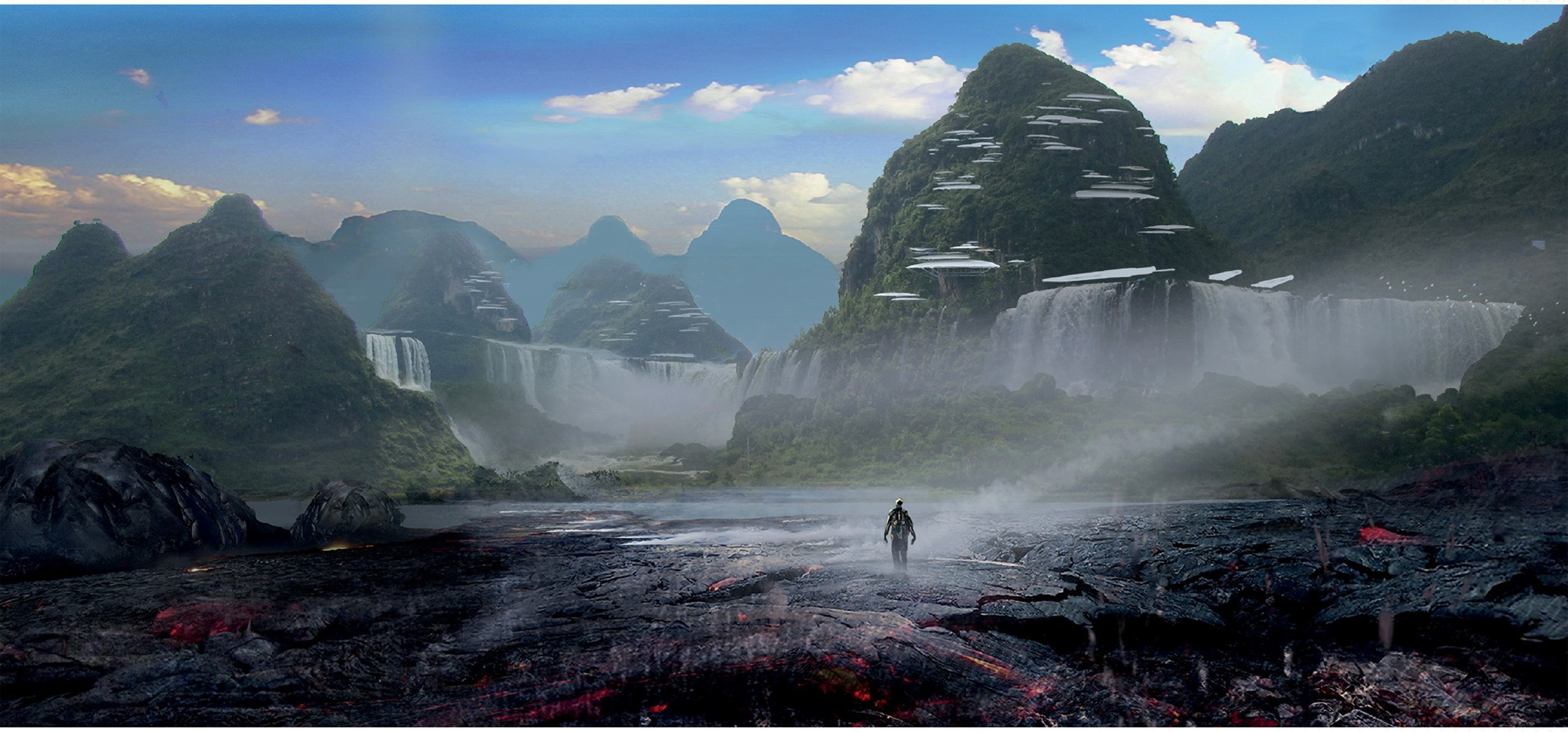


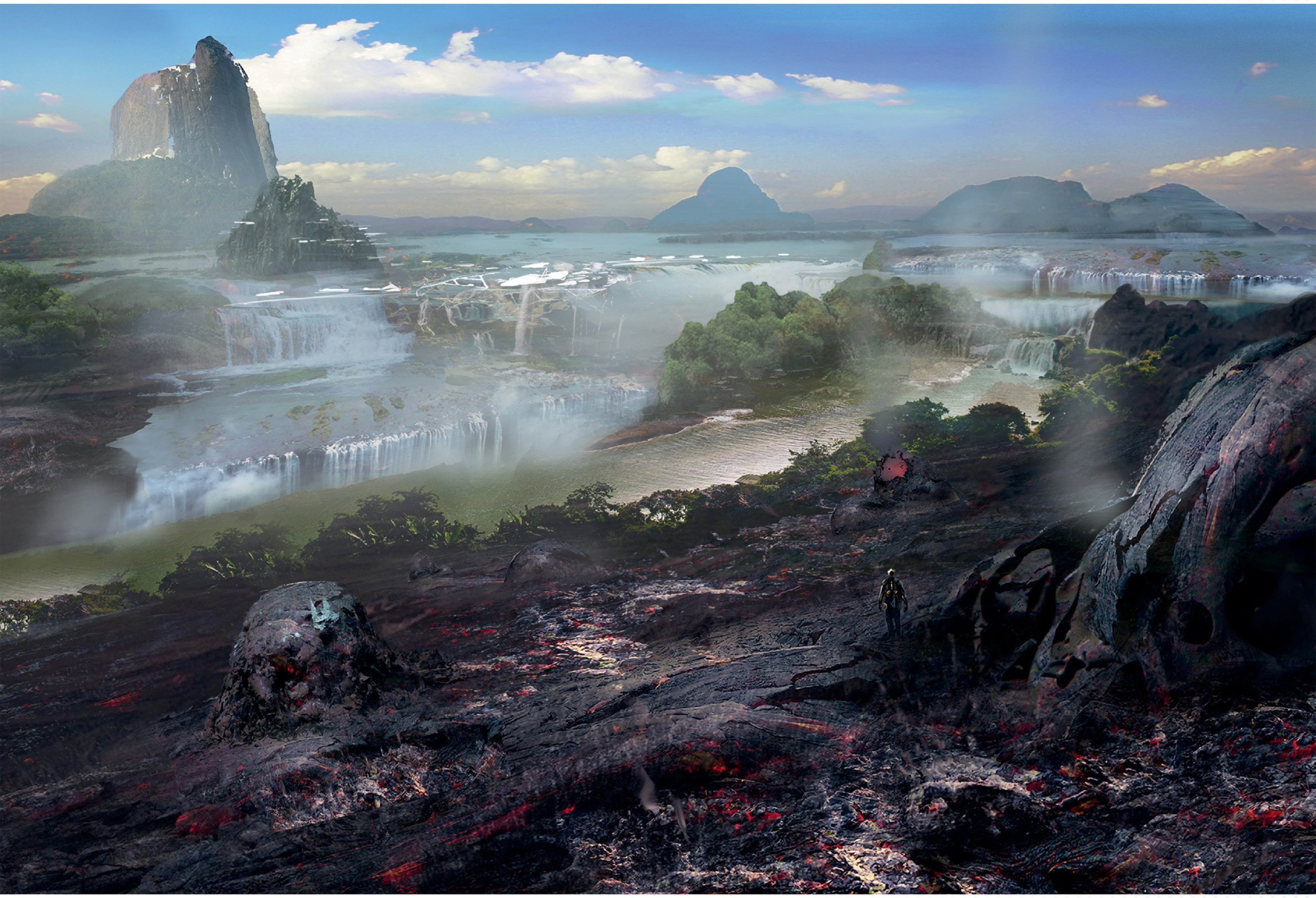


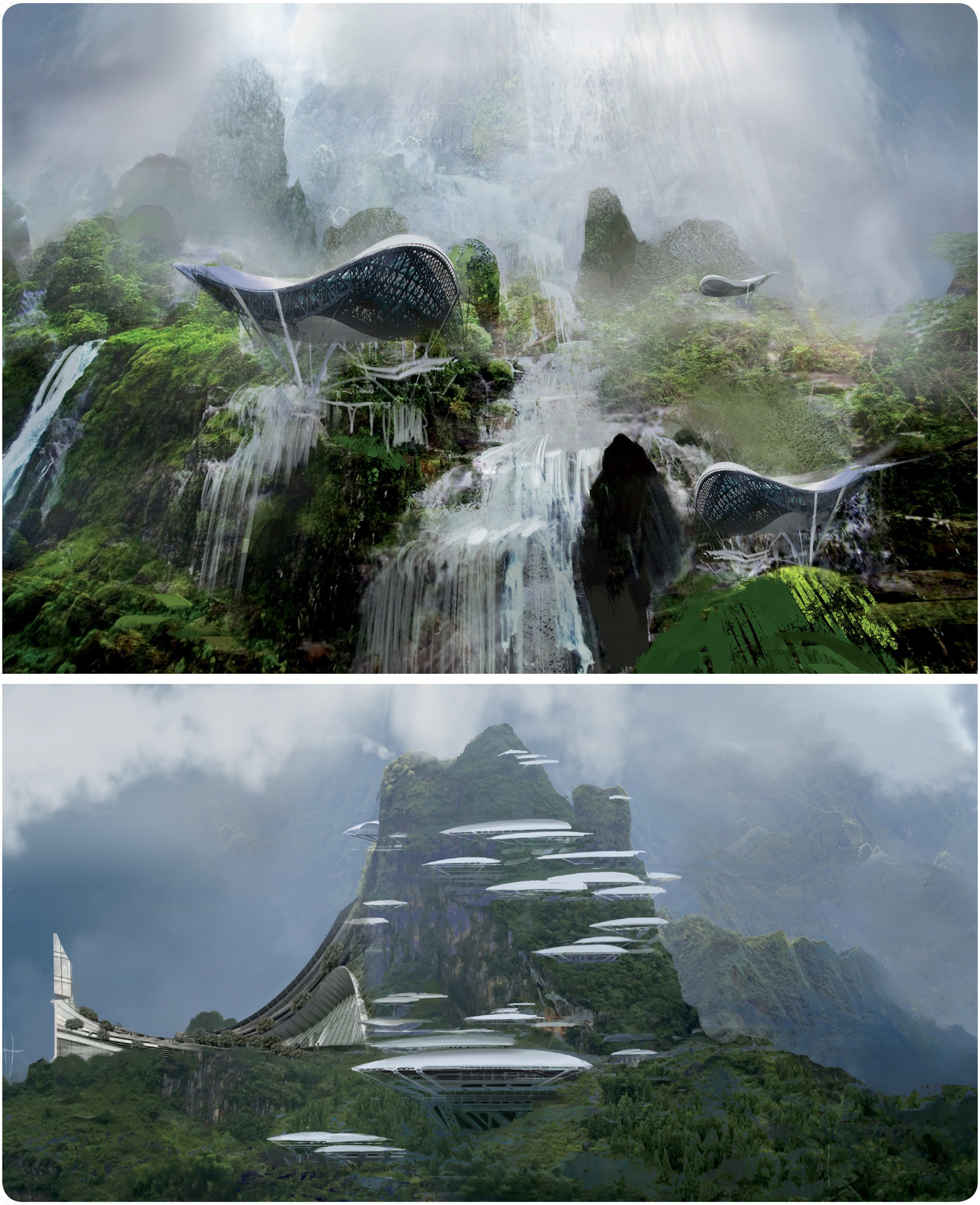


AYA

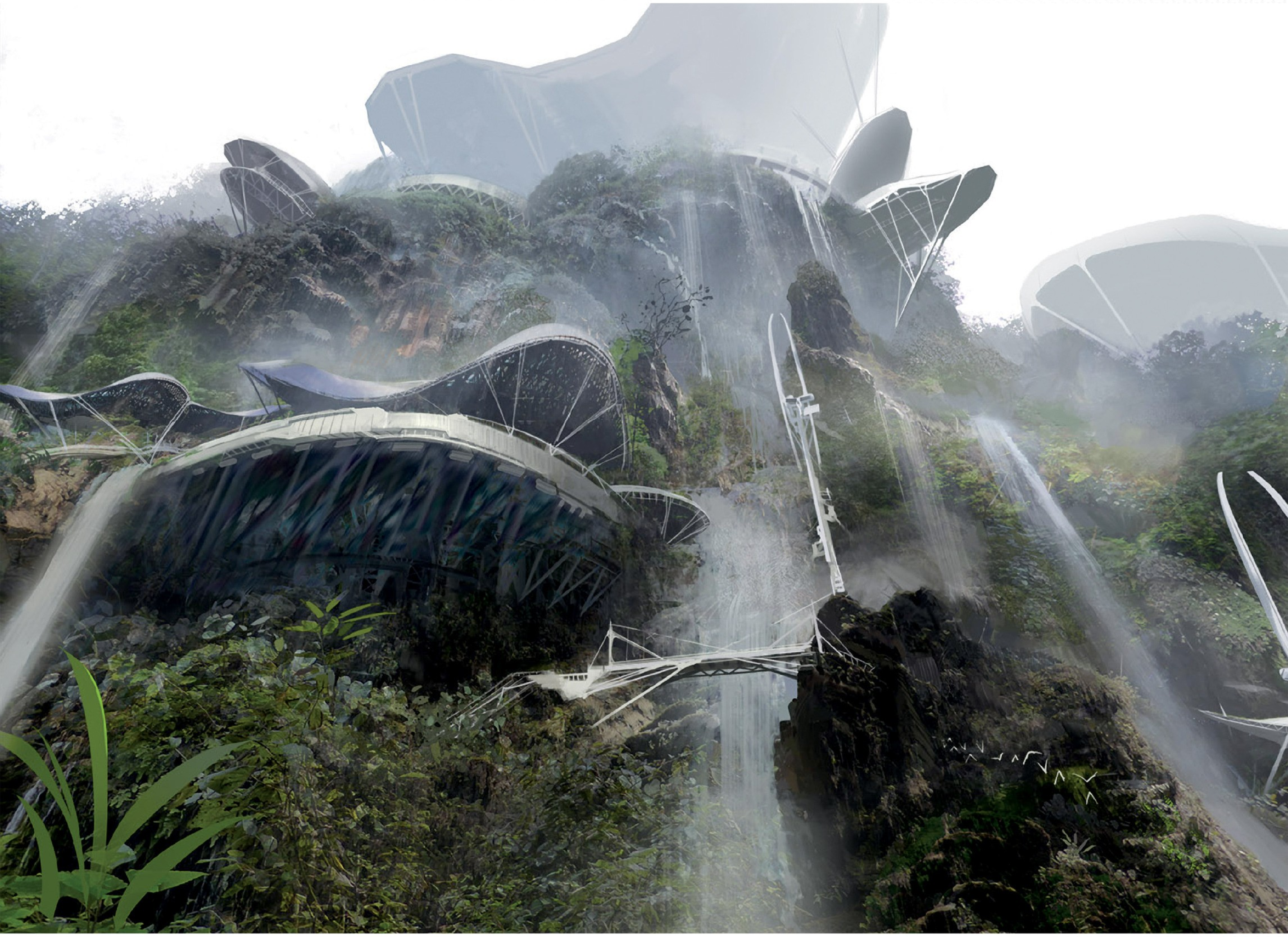
JM: The hub of Aya is meant to be our ray of hope throughout the game. The resilience of the landscape, the imposing lava terrain, and the foreboding cloud cover really help show the contrast of what we're fighting for and why it's at risk. It was a great metaphor for our effort to free the Heleus Cluster and fight for our new home.

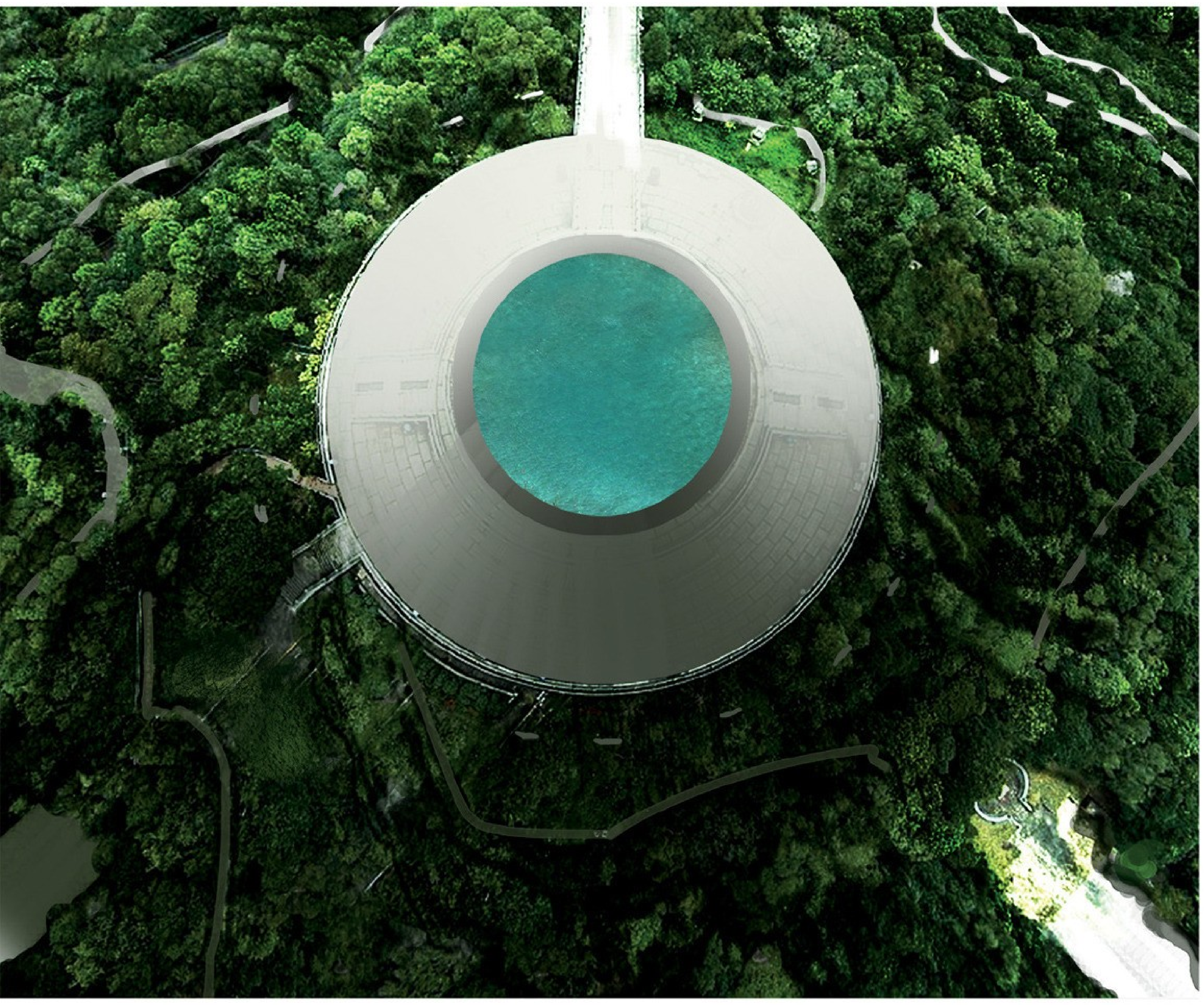


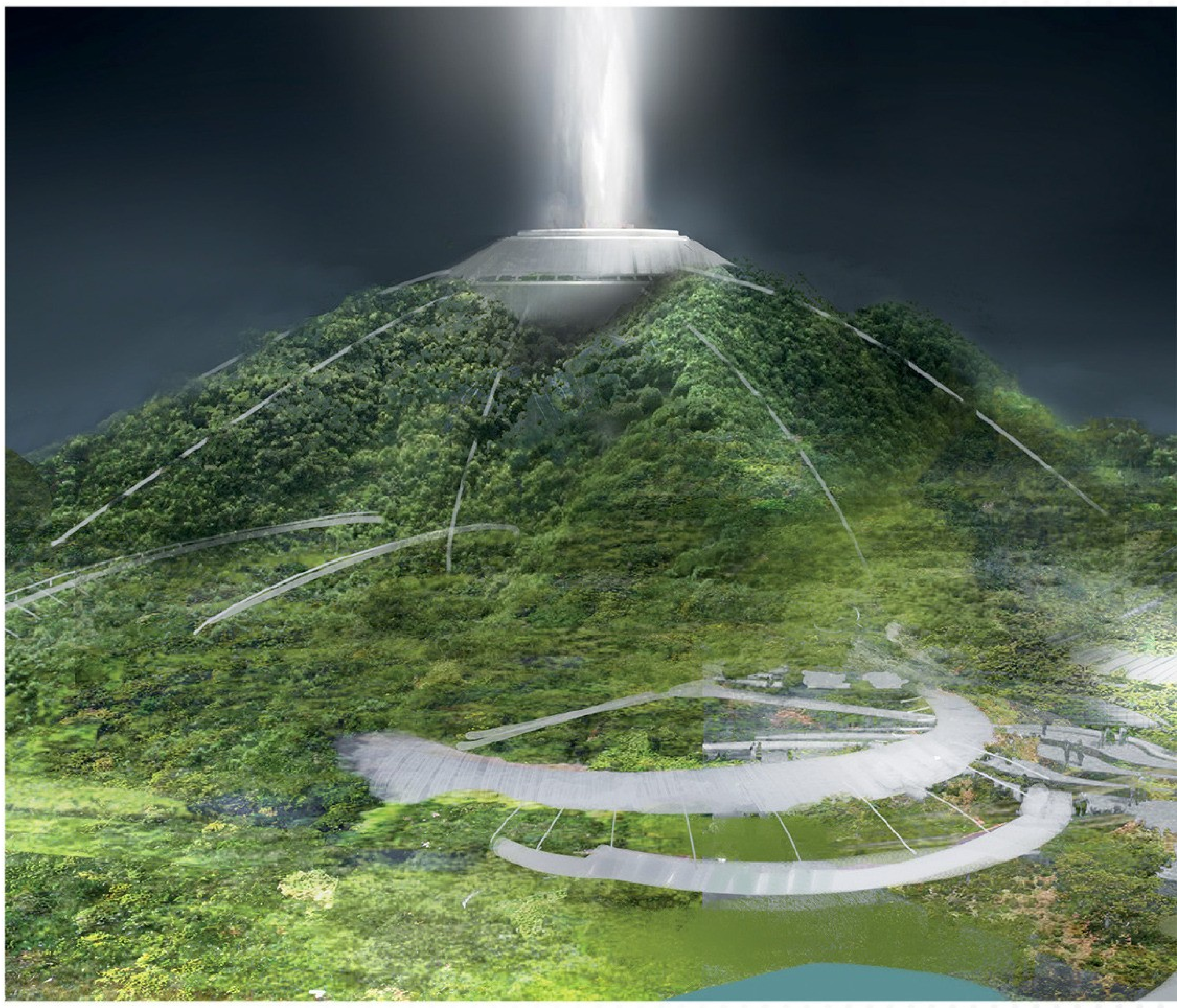


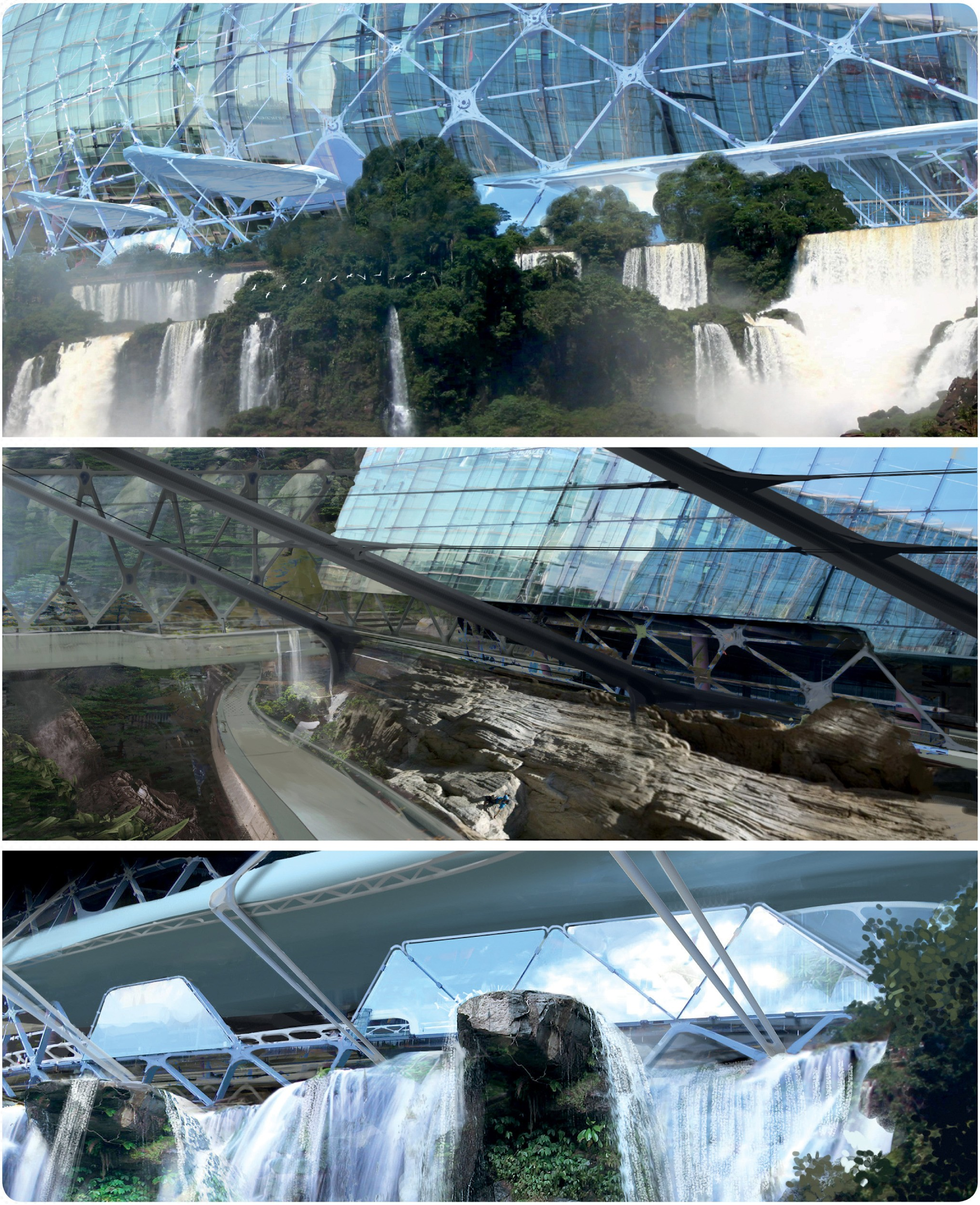


JM: These are designs for the Aya outpost. It's a serene and open concept, and the idea was that the angara would embrace their landscape and build to complement it. A lot of their designs were originally built around the use of hydraulic power and harnessing natural energies.

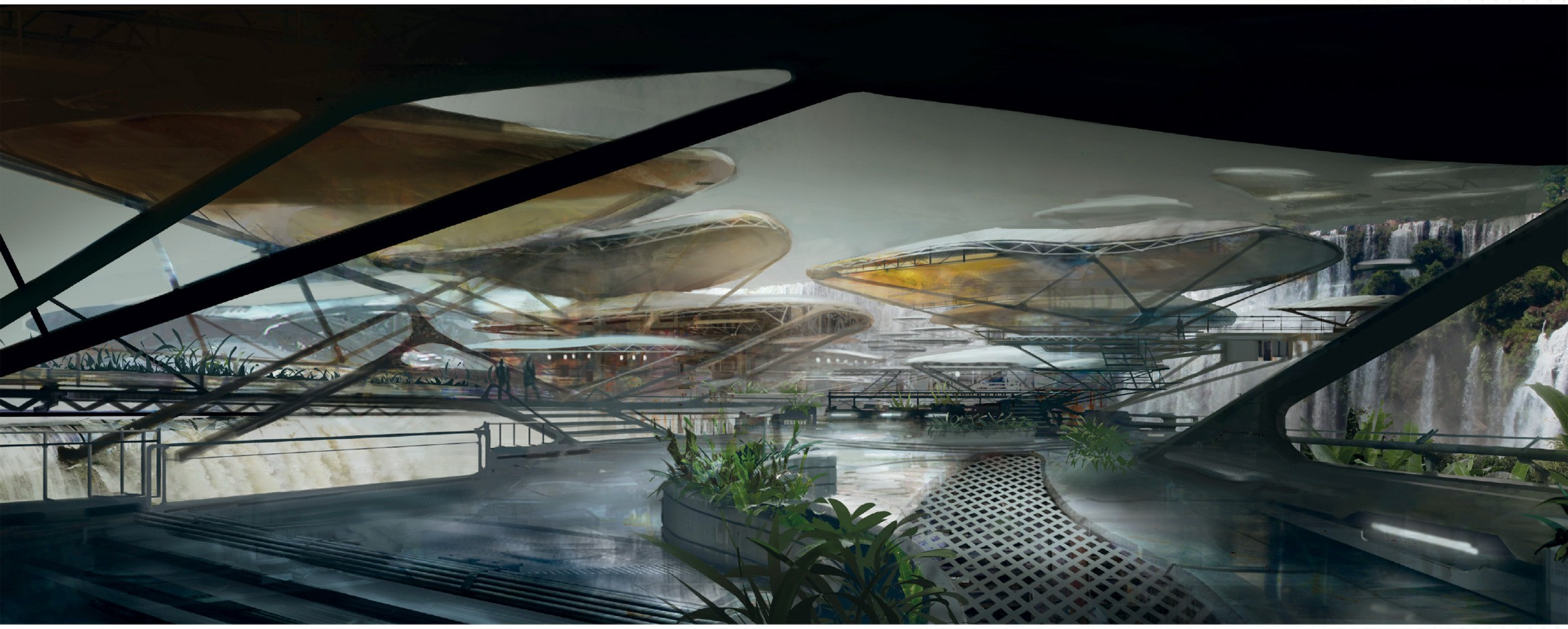


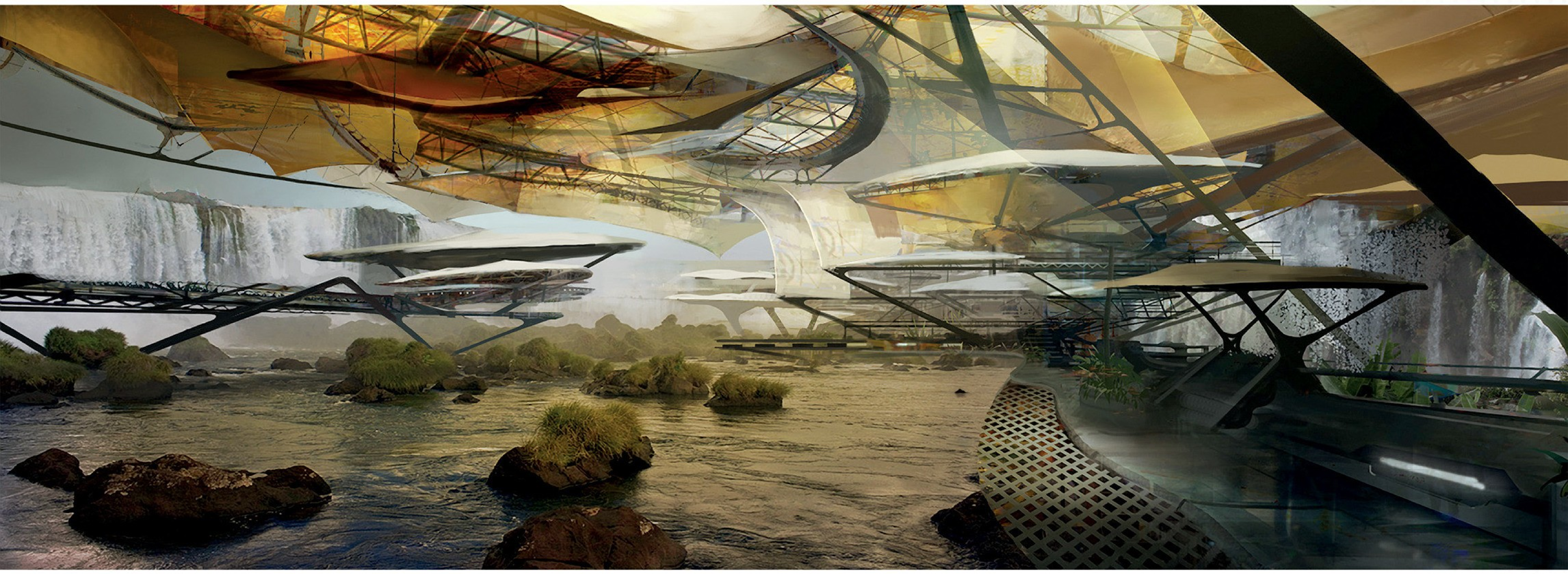


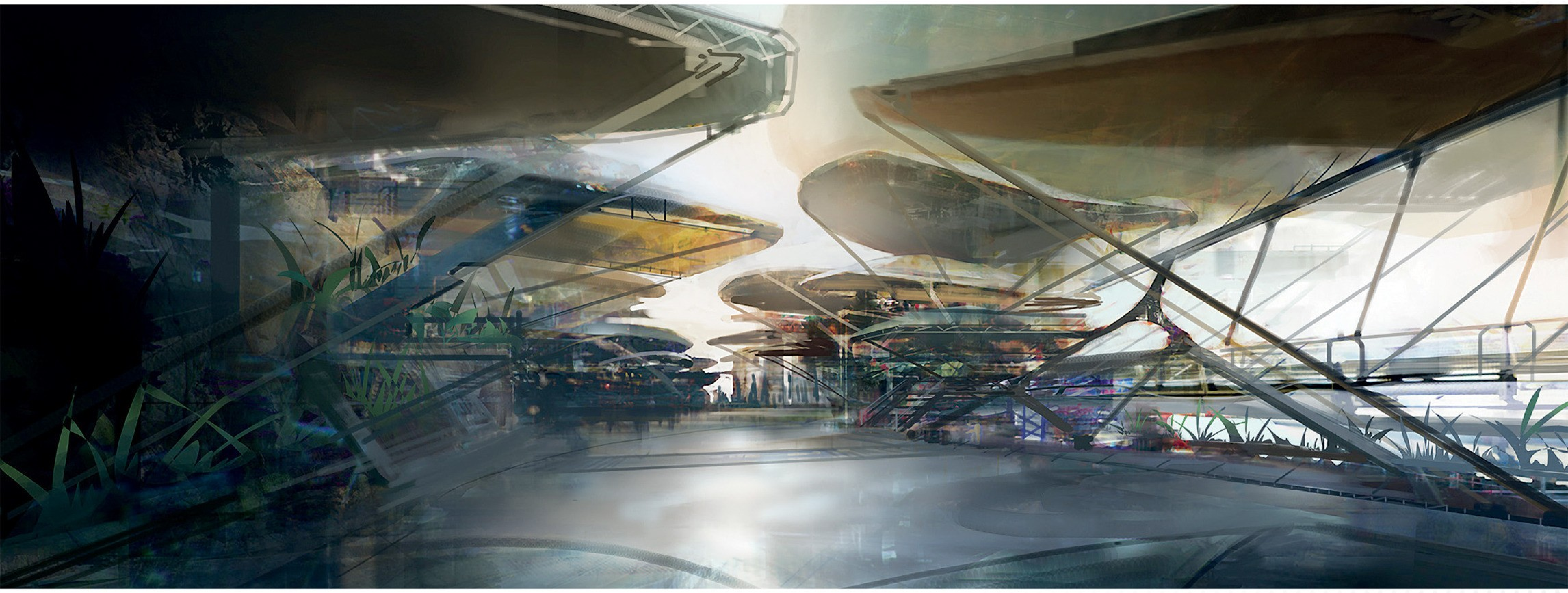


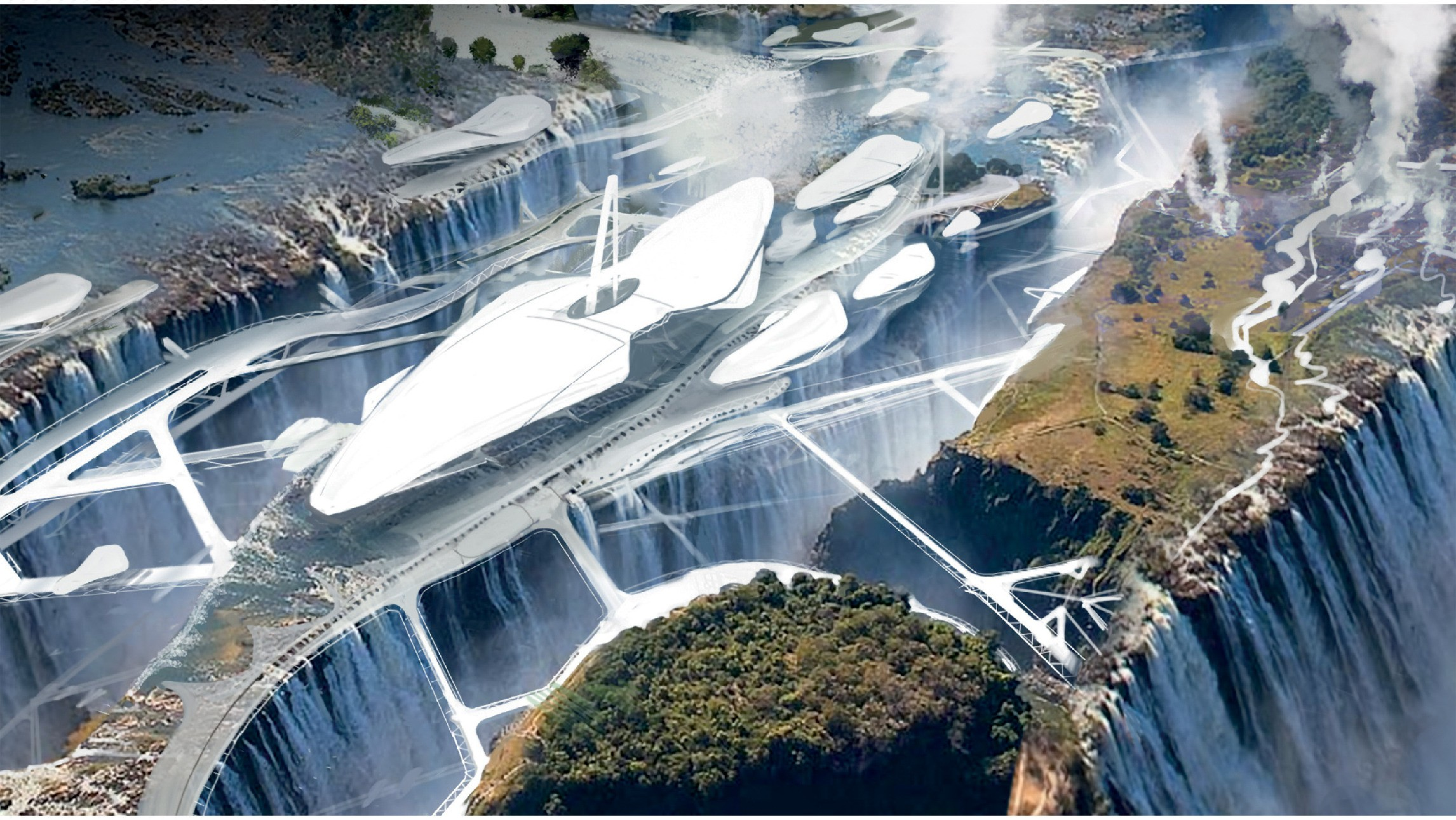


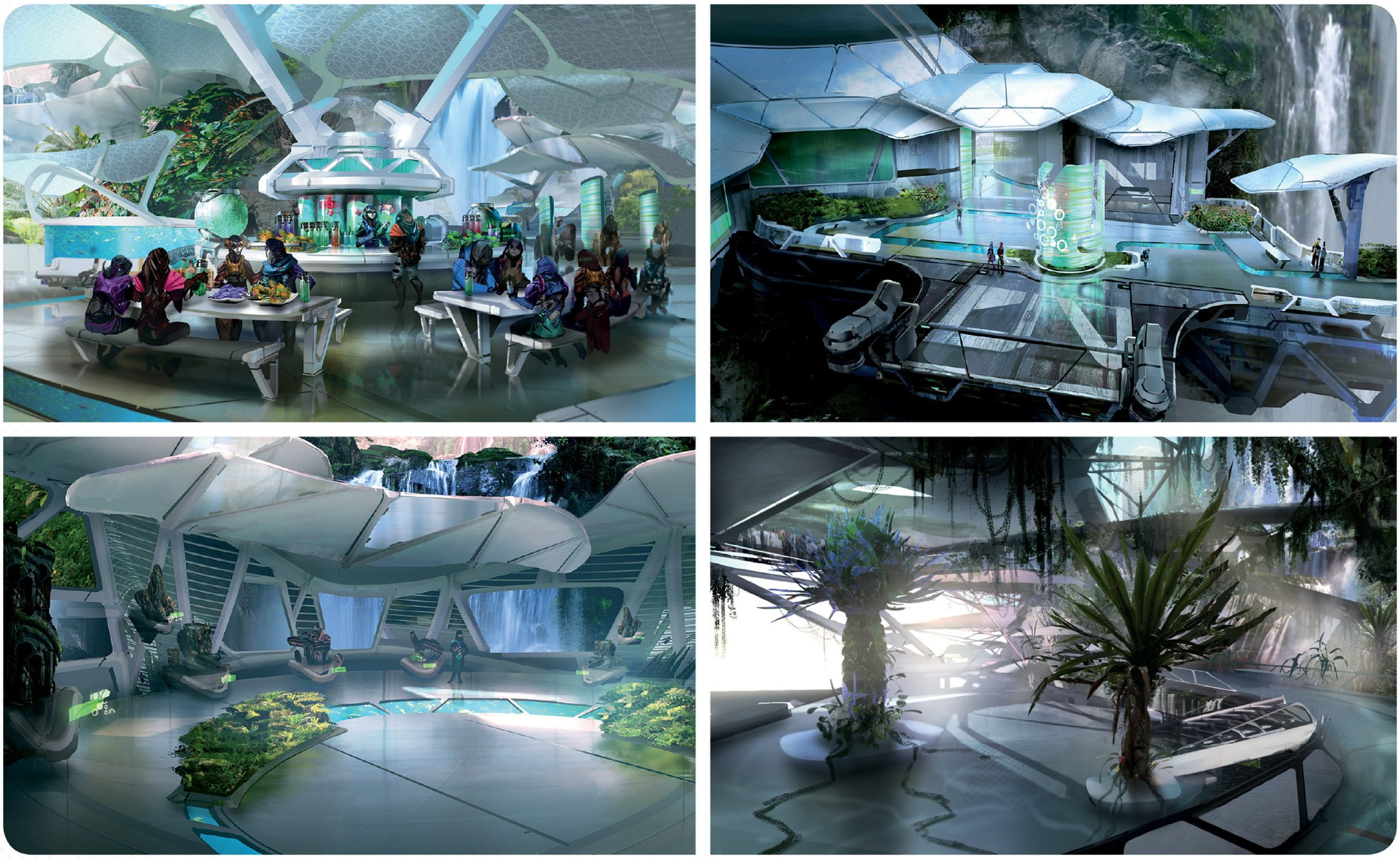
JM: These are various locations across the Aya hub. The open-air concept lent itself well to the idea of the angara embracing their landscape. You can see natural terrain and geological formations in almost all directions.



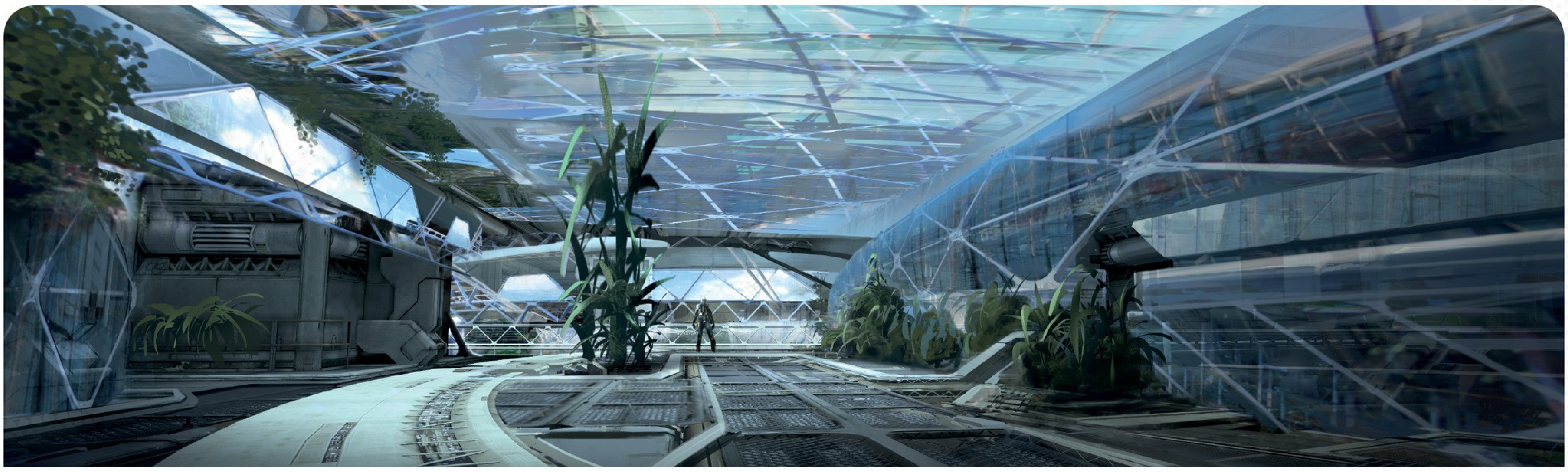


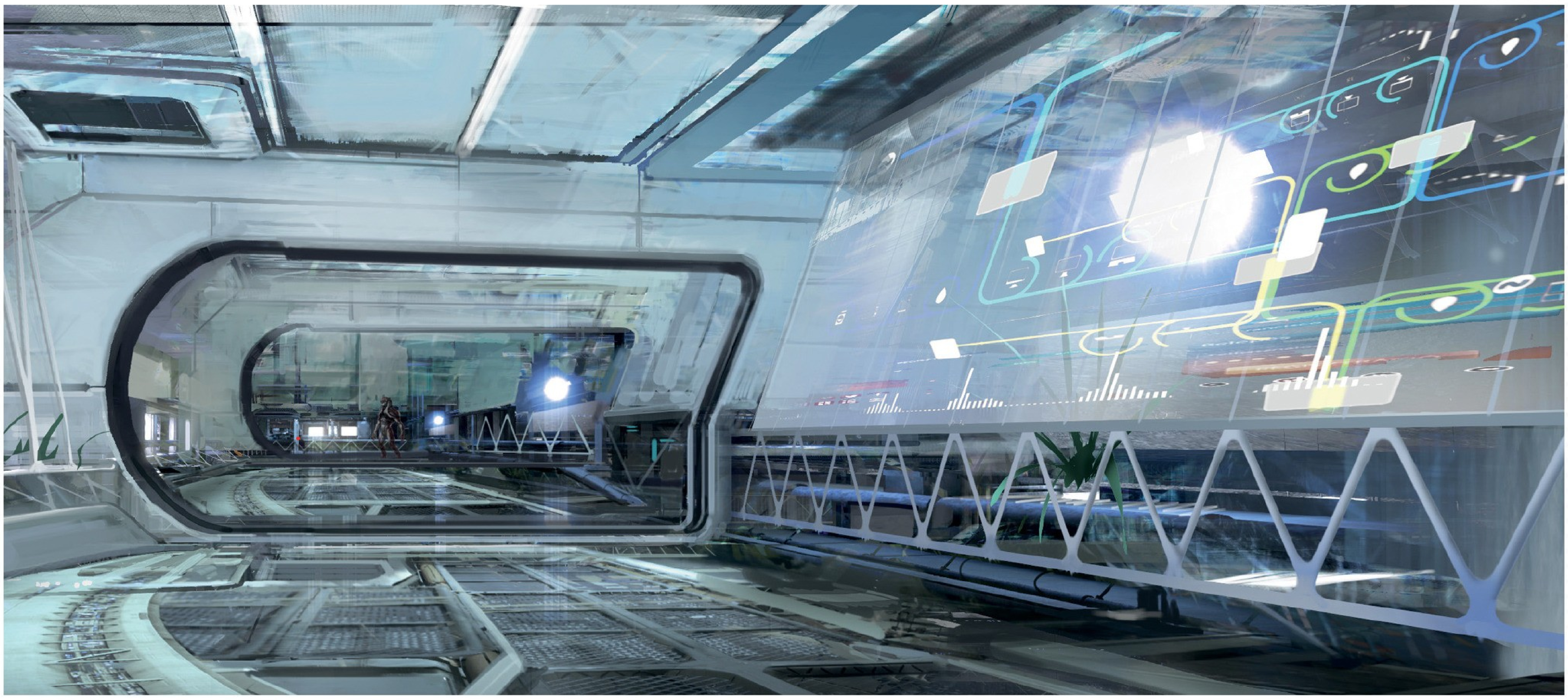


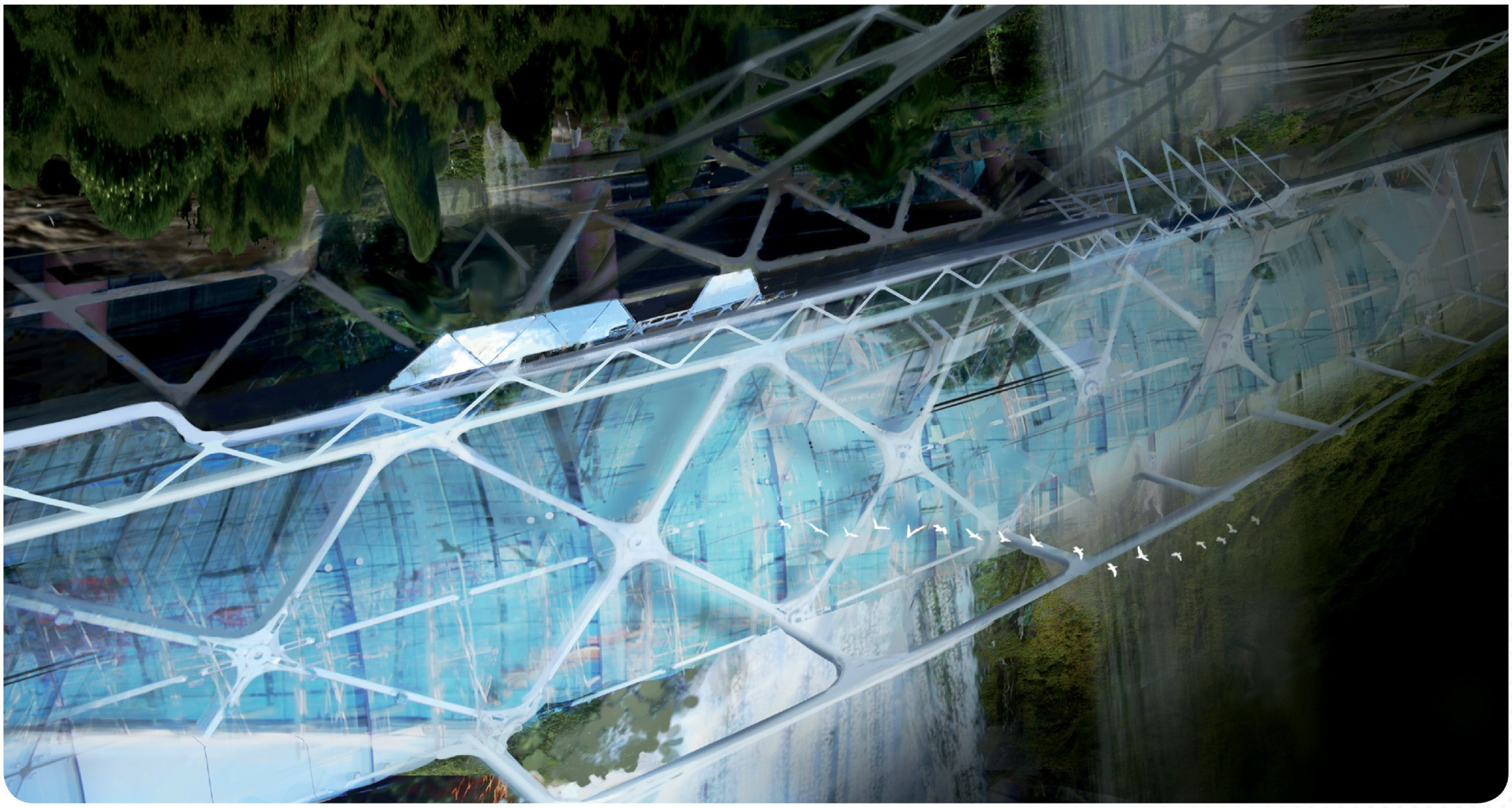


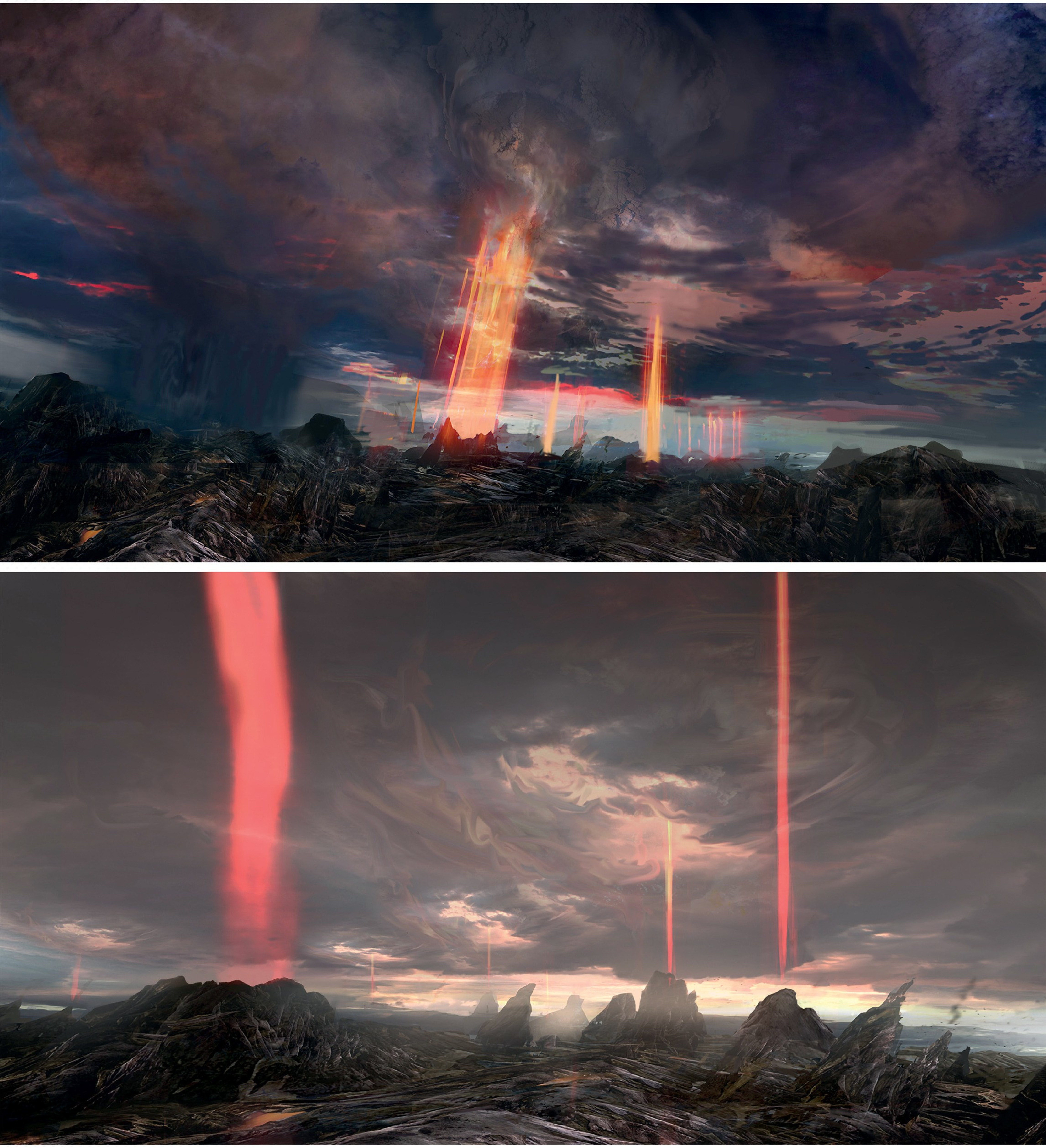


JM: These are additional locations across the Aya hub.

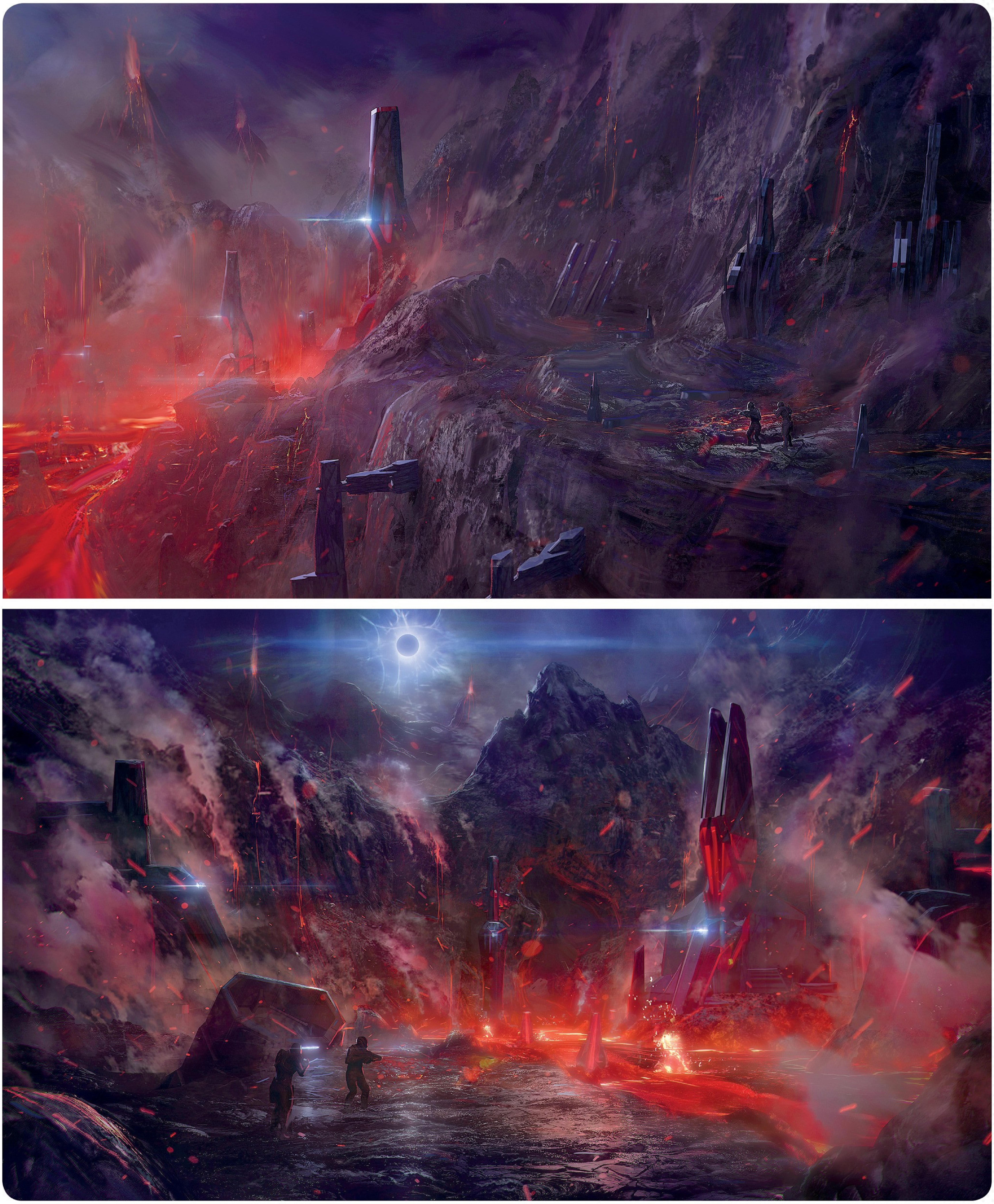




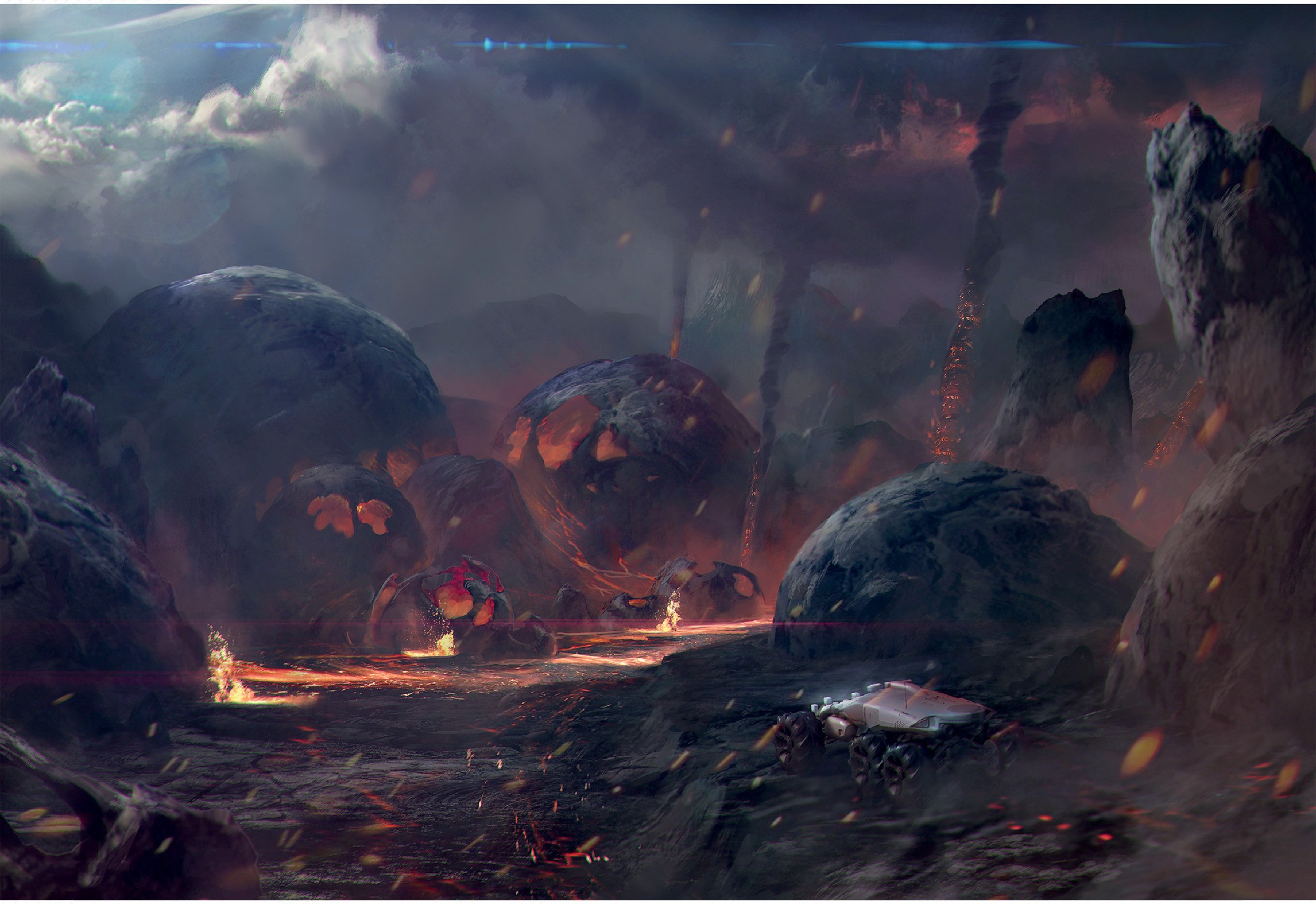


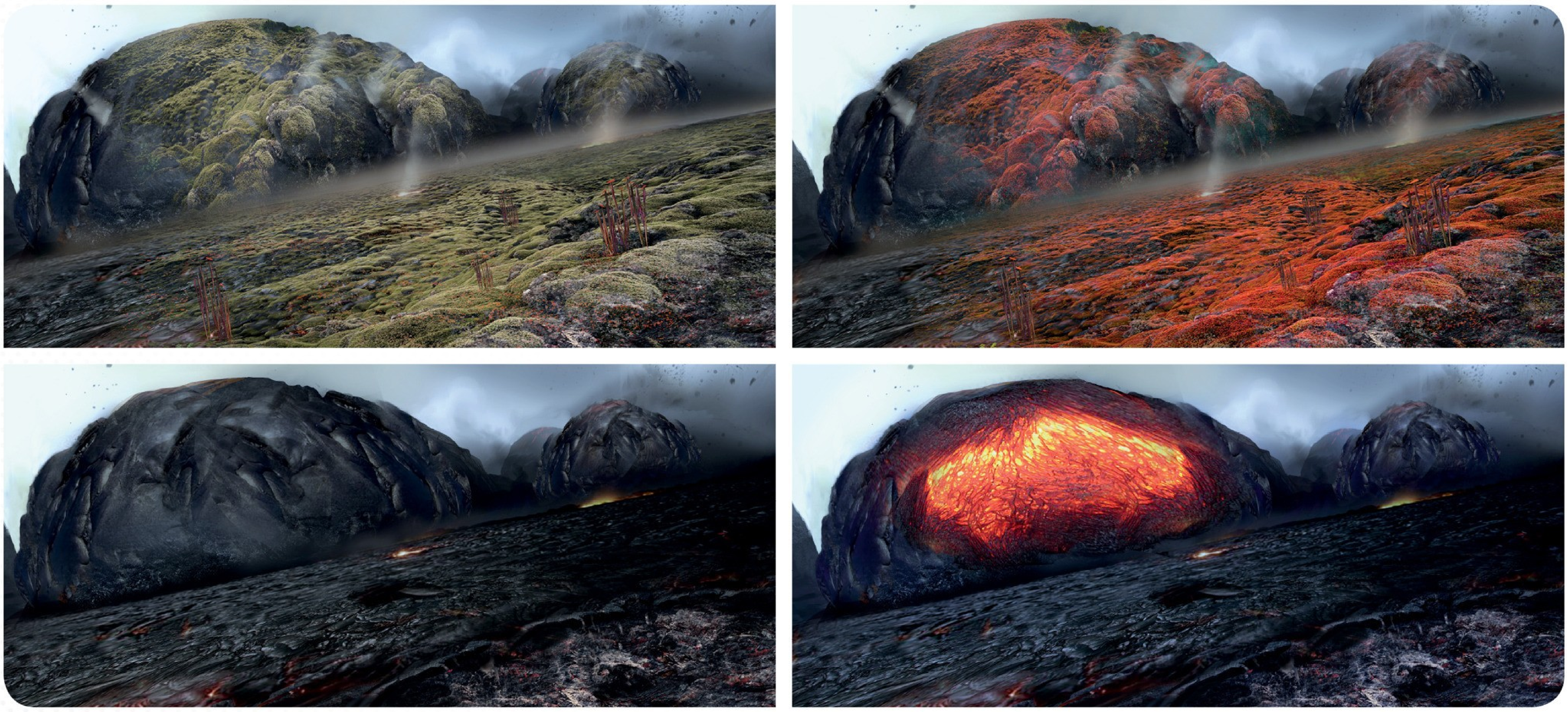


JM: These are early planet designs. The idea of fire columns that reach up through the cloud cover was something that came about early on and really helped provide a visual hook to these environments.

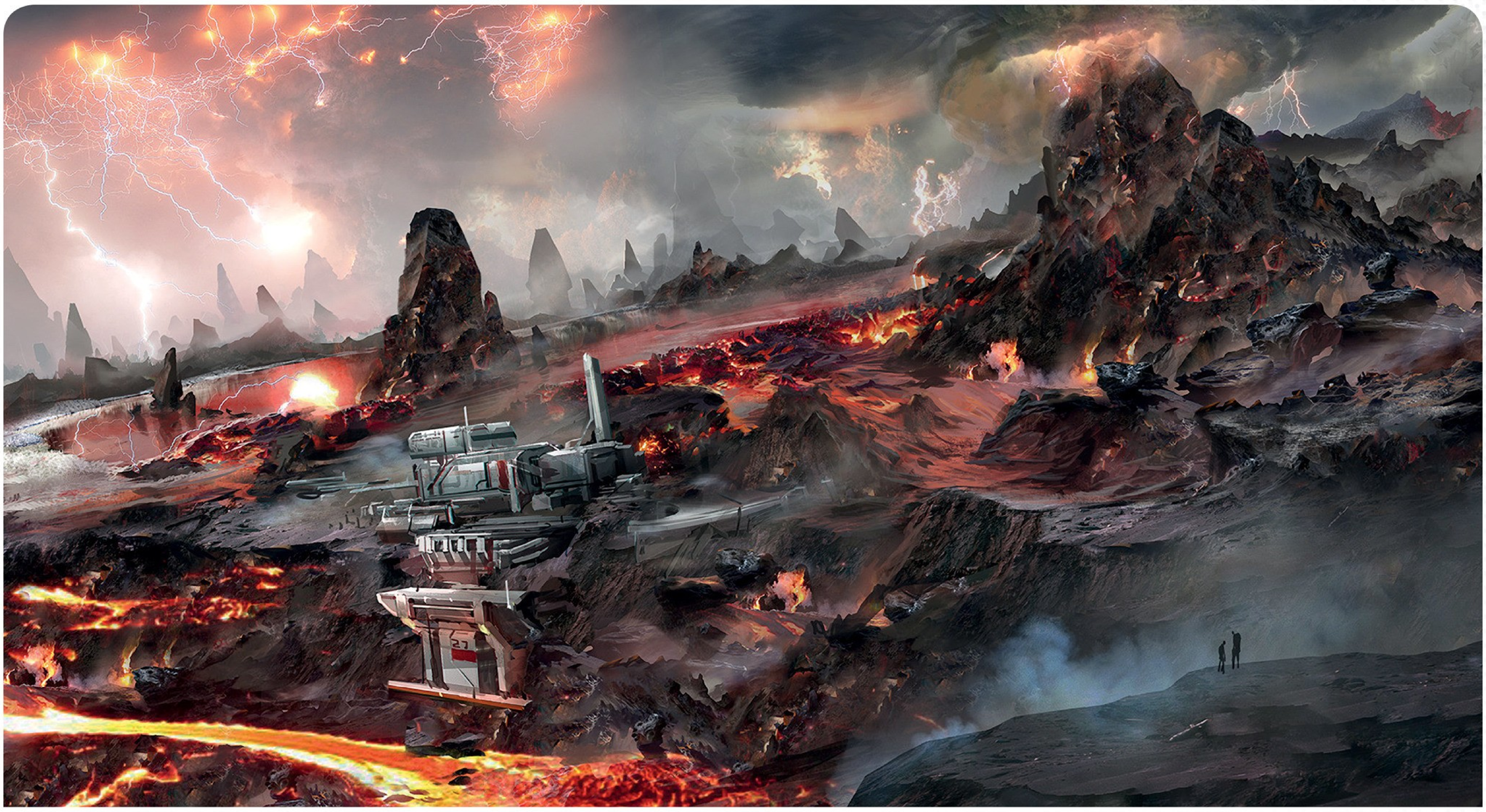


KF: The concepts done for Peebee's loyalty mission were the first of the loyalty missions I worked on. They proved to be a great opportunity to showcase a very volatile environment. This specific location also features great storytelling elements with a mysterious ancient history. This mission features ancient Remnant structures half-buried in both molten and solidified lava. It also features ominous cave networks that stand out from any other area of *Andromeda*.





KF: Each of the locations in *Andromeda* features a distinct biome with unique hazards and landscapes to explore. A key feature of volcanic areas is massive solidified lava bubbles. These domed structures are formed by rapidly cooling lava as it is bubbling out of the surface.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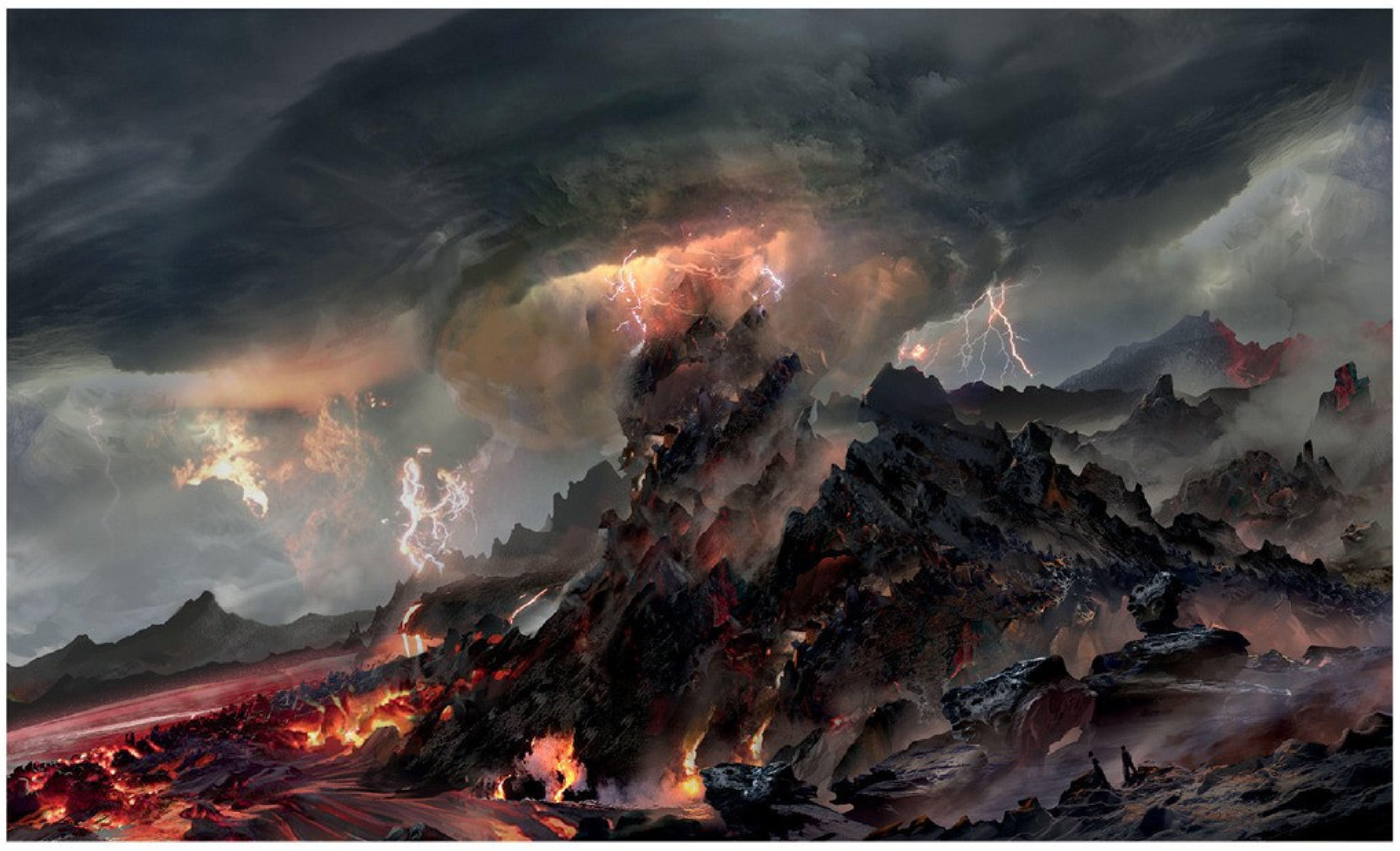
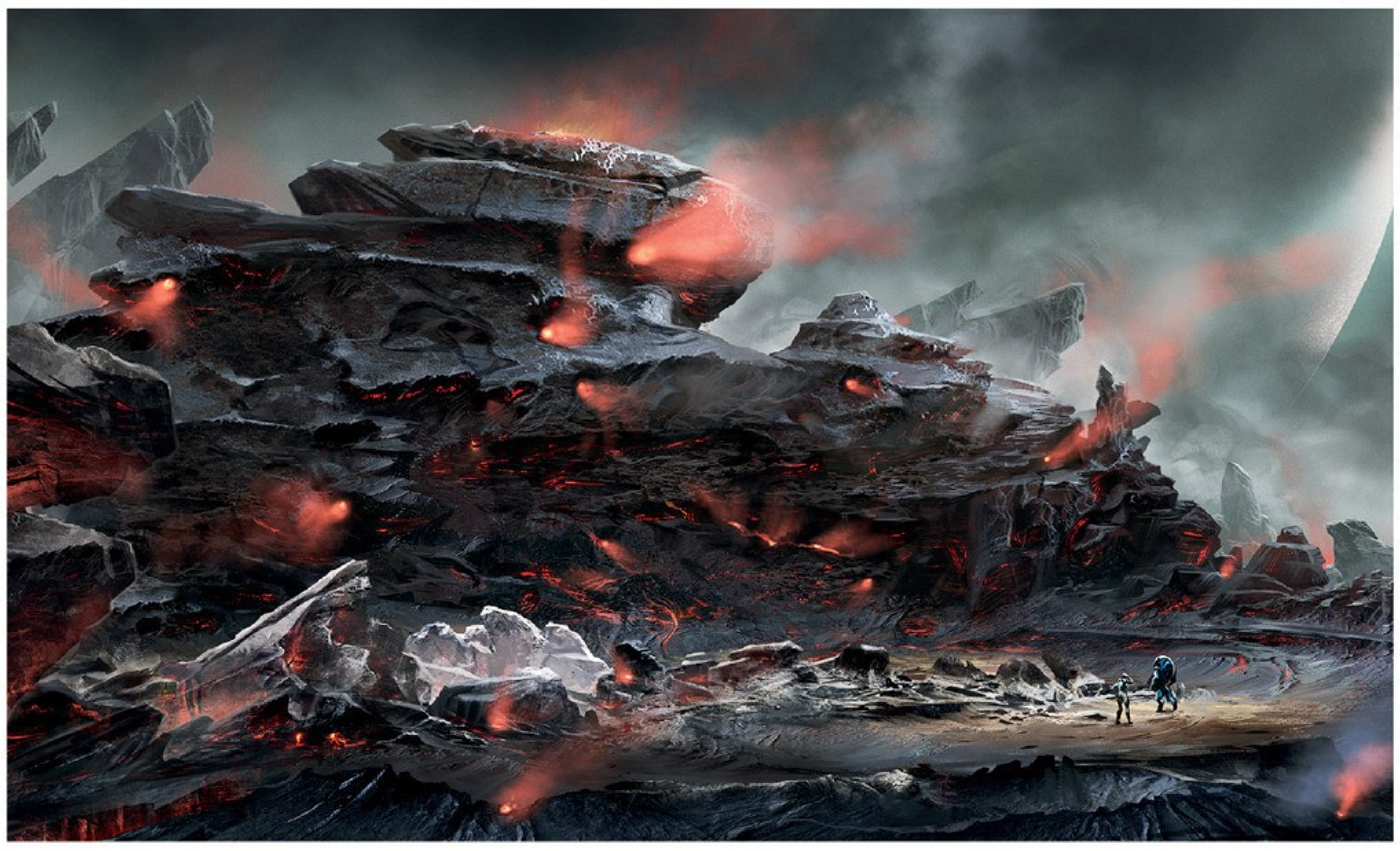
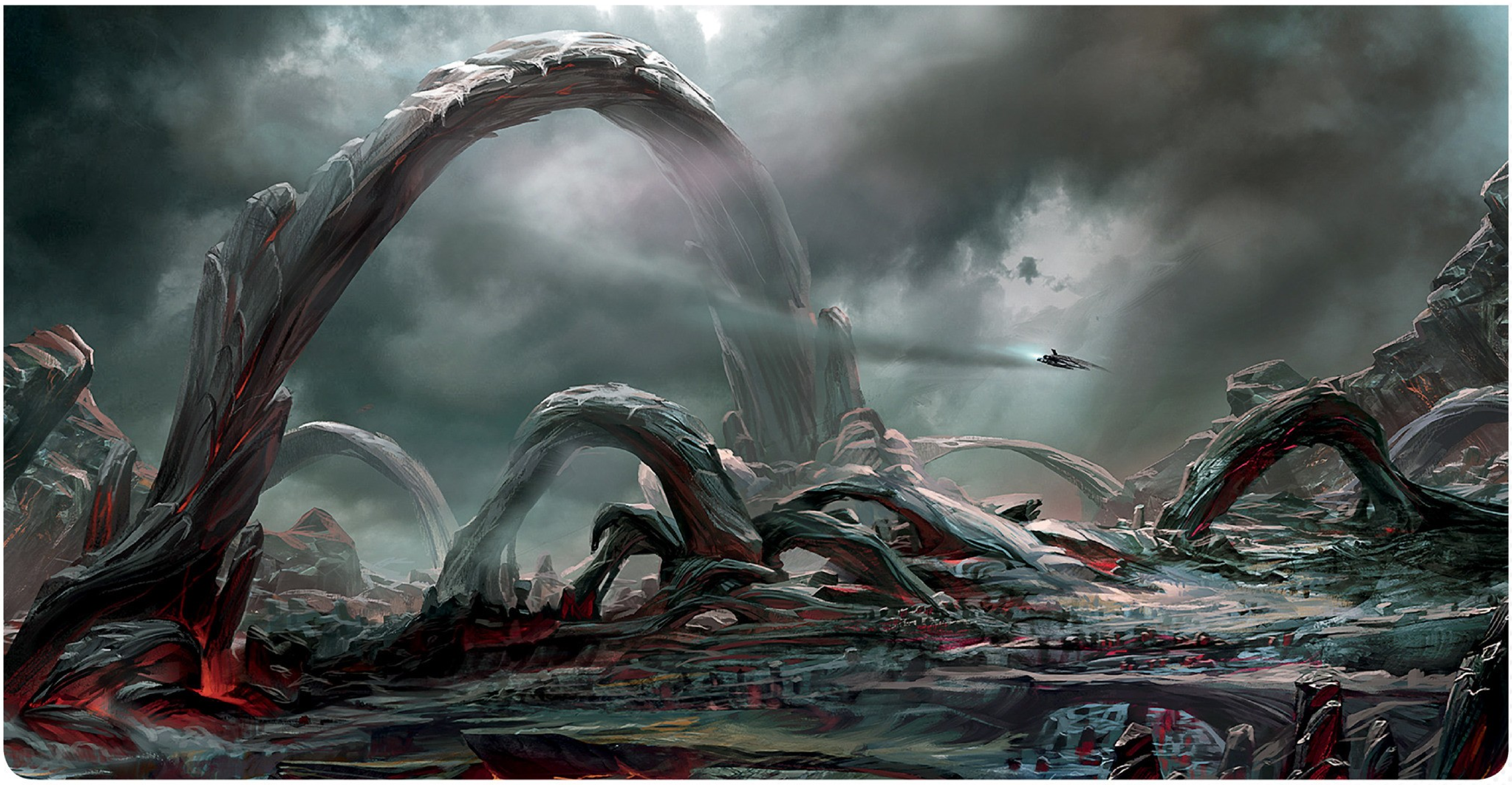
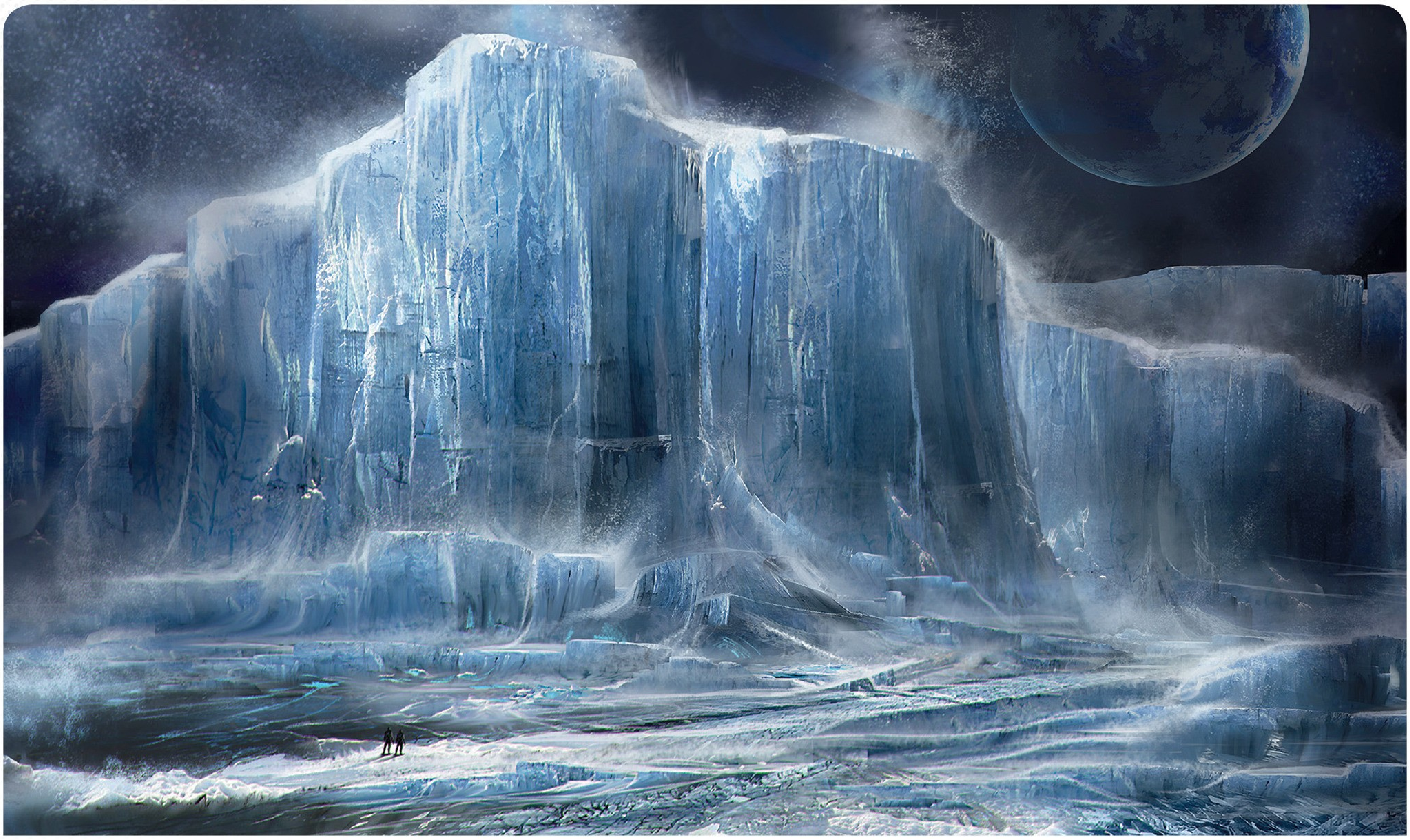
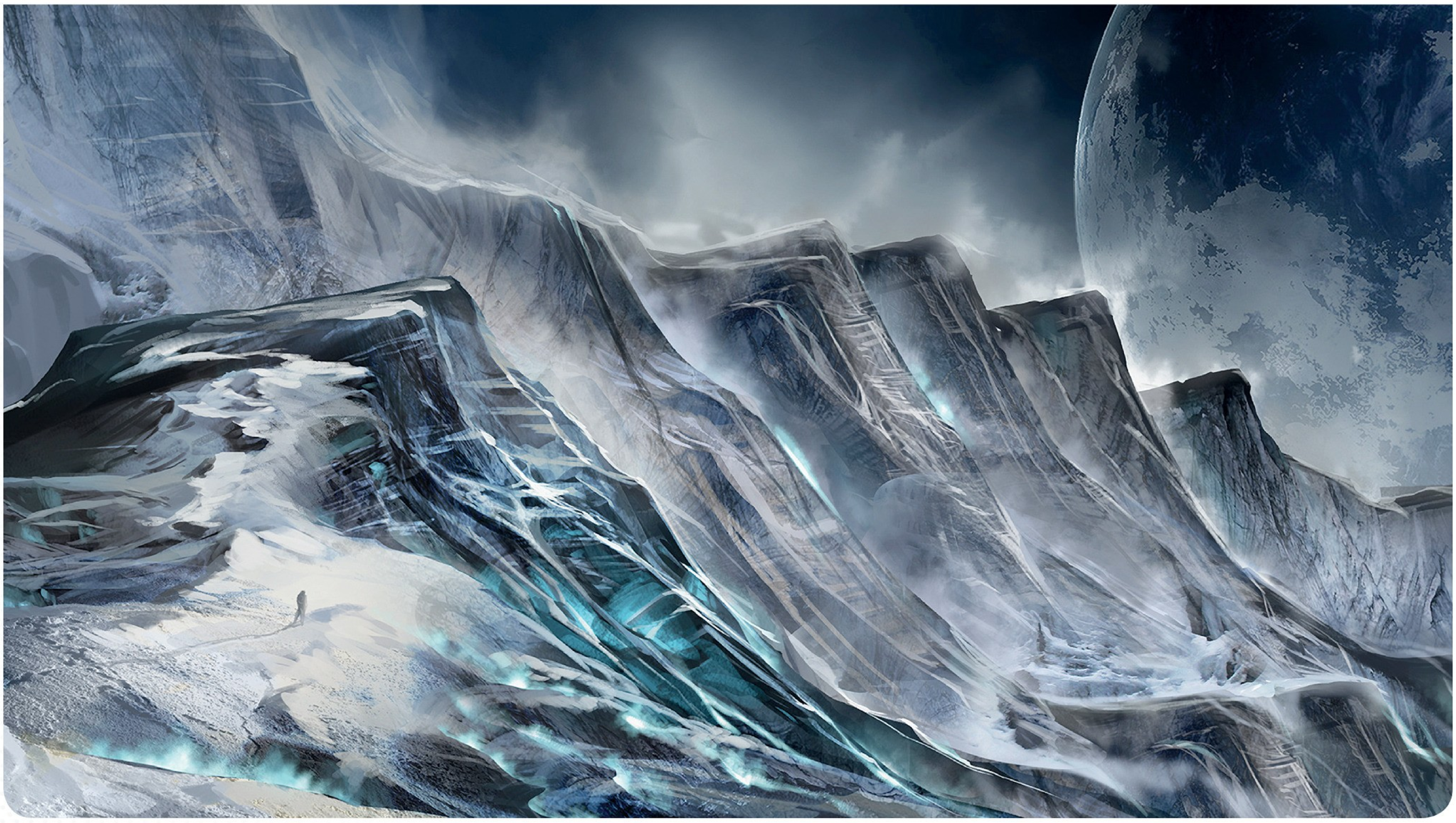




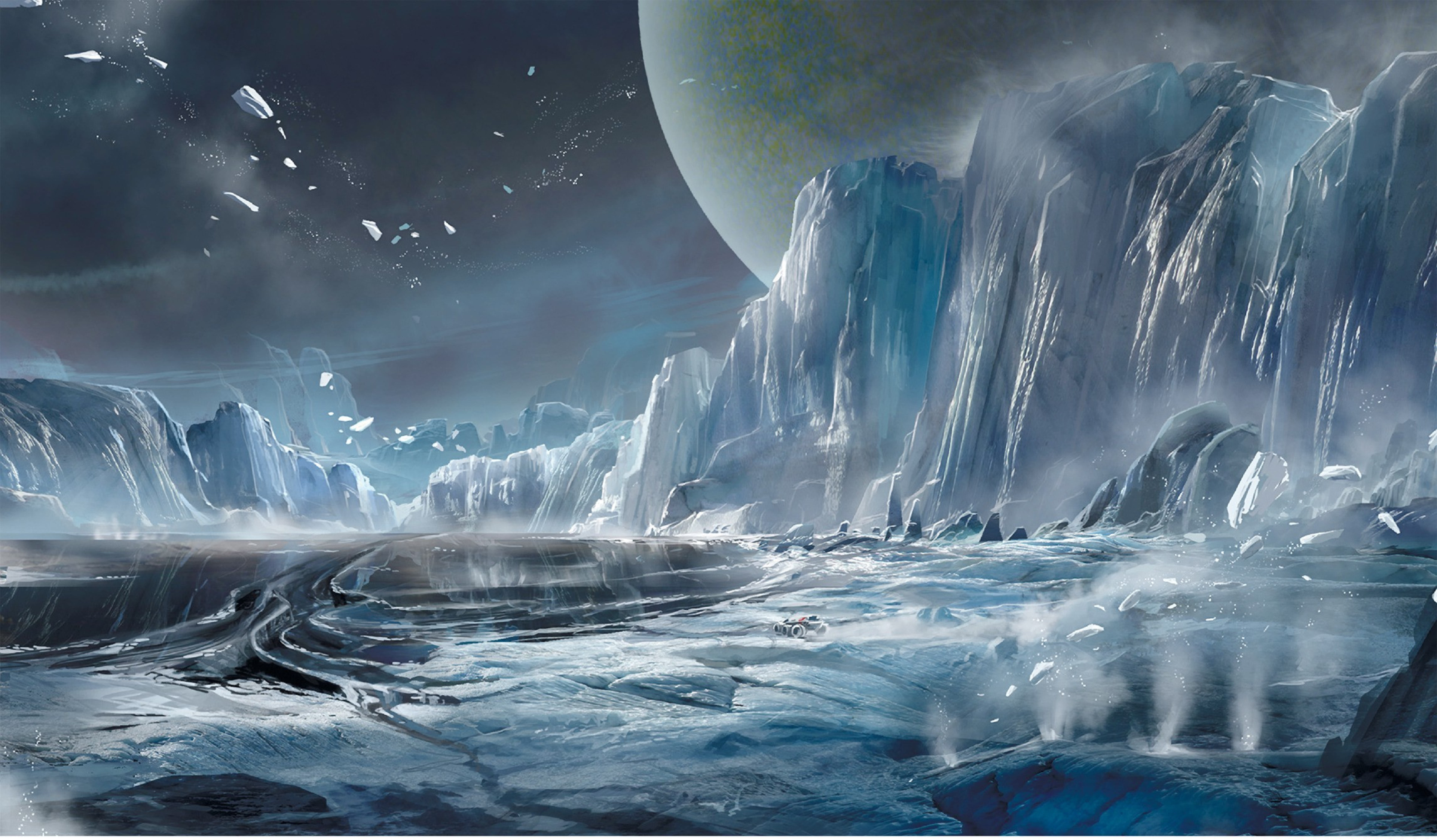


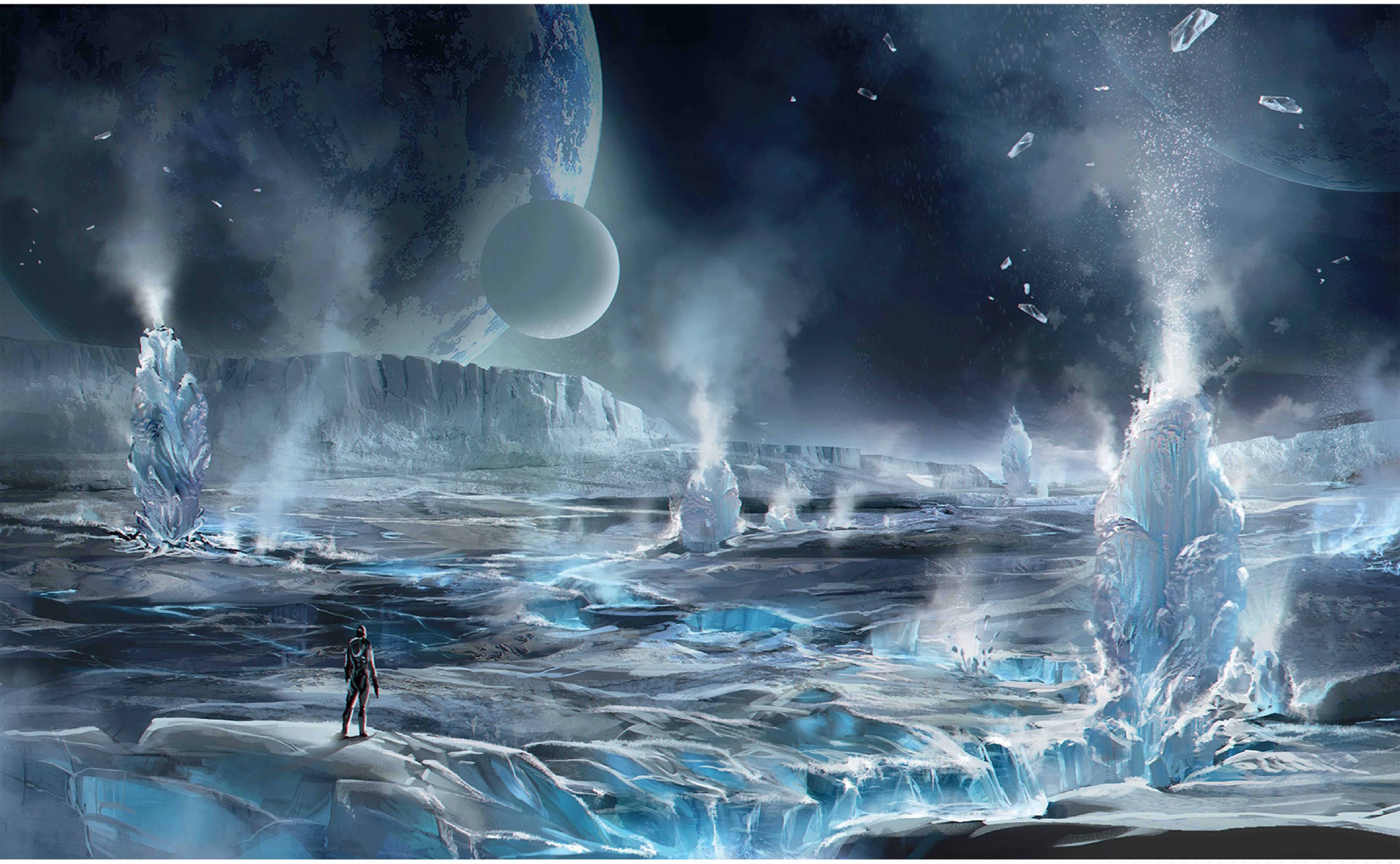


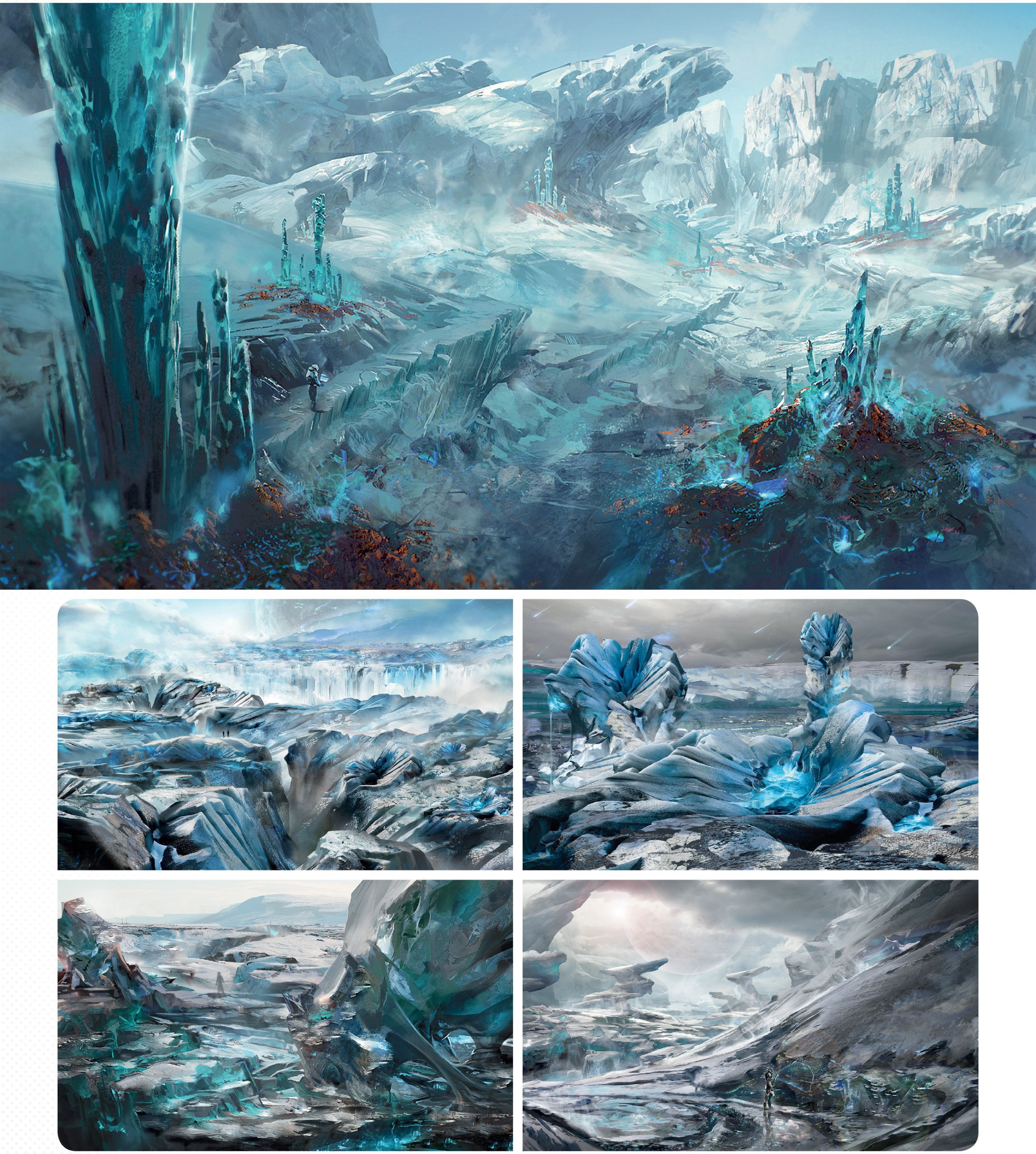


VOELD

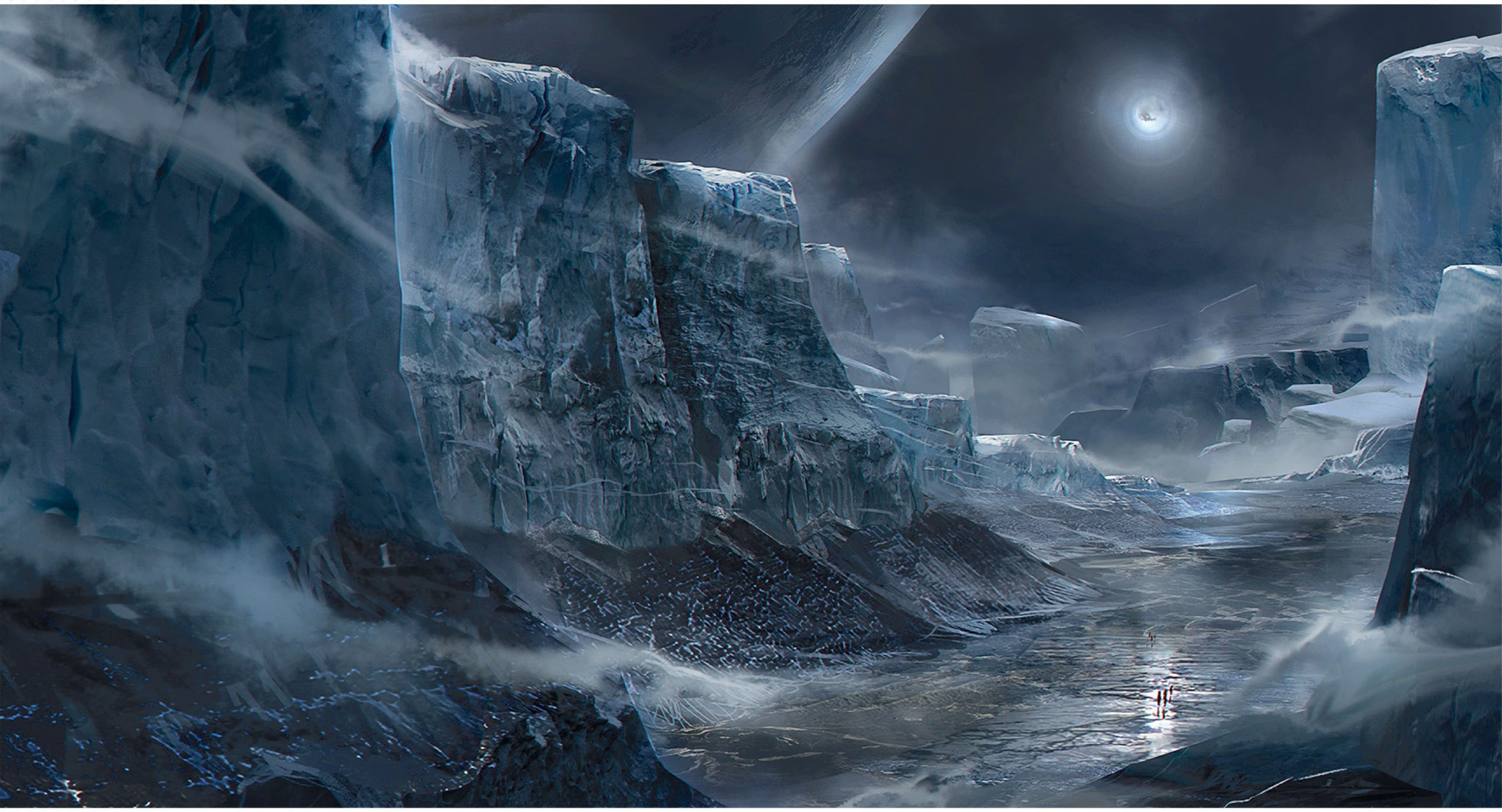
JM: We really wanted to sell the scale for our ice planet. Globally frozen planets would have incredible mountain ranges, fissures, and glaciers, all of which would dwarf the player. Another big element we wanted to play up was the subsurface glow of hazardous currents beneath the ice. Trying to show that there's some sort of activity beneath the ice implied there is more to this location than what's immediately apparent on the surface.

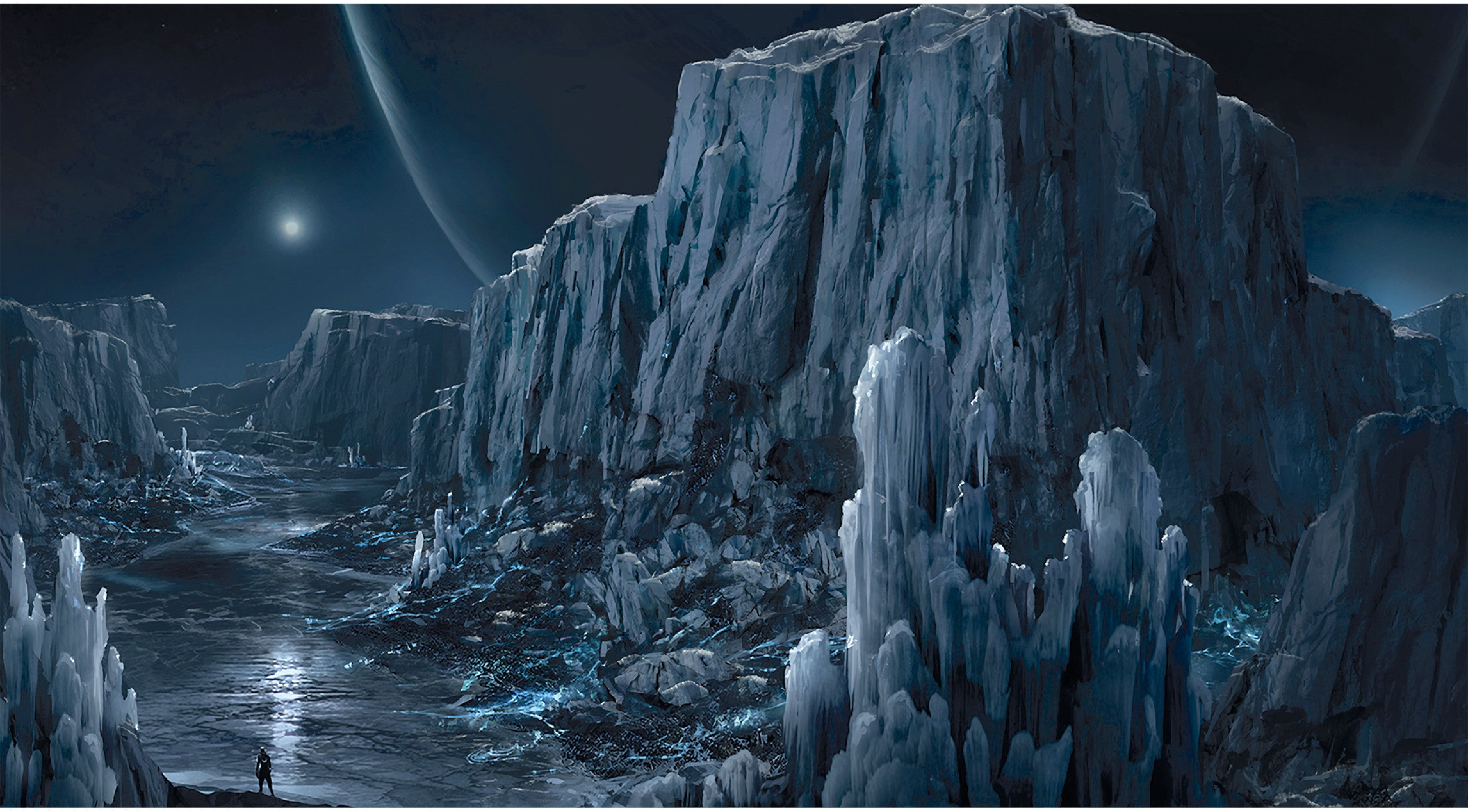




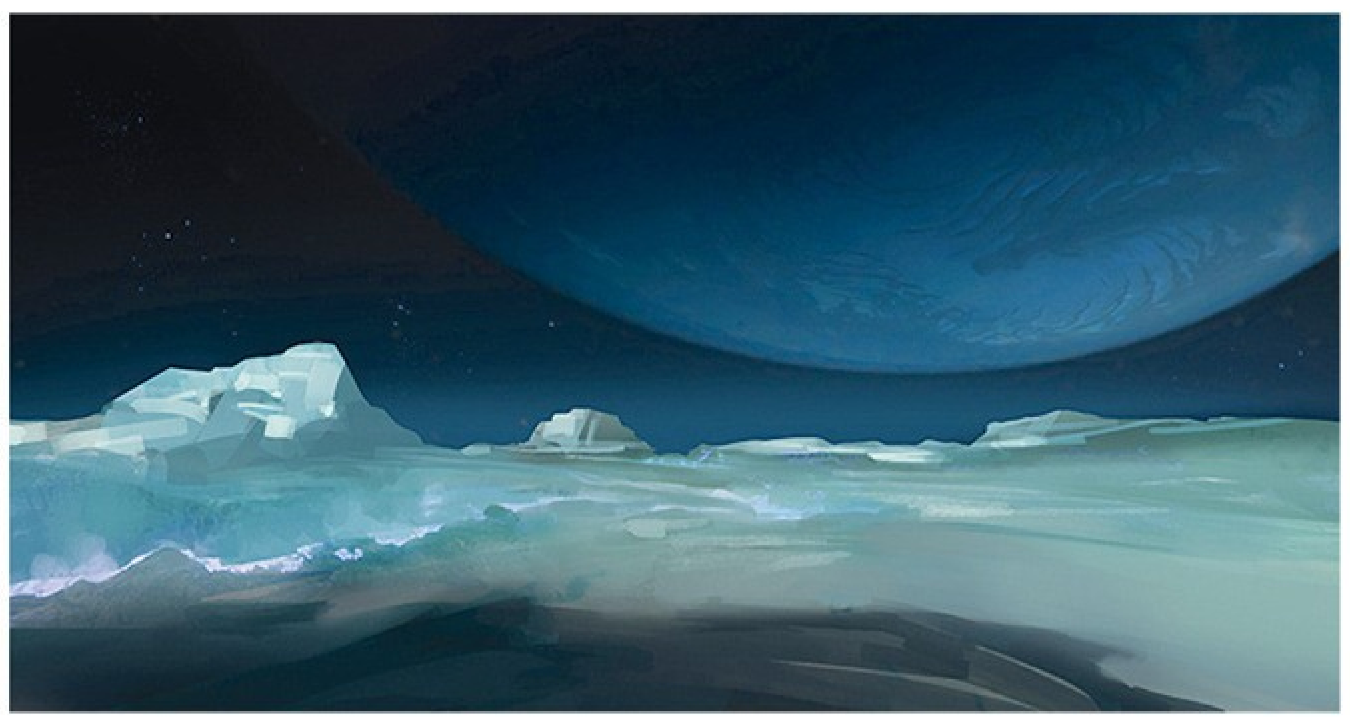


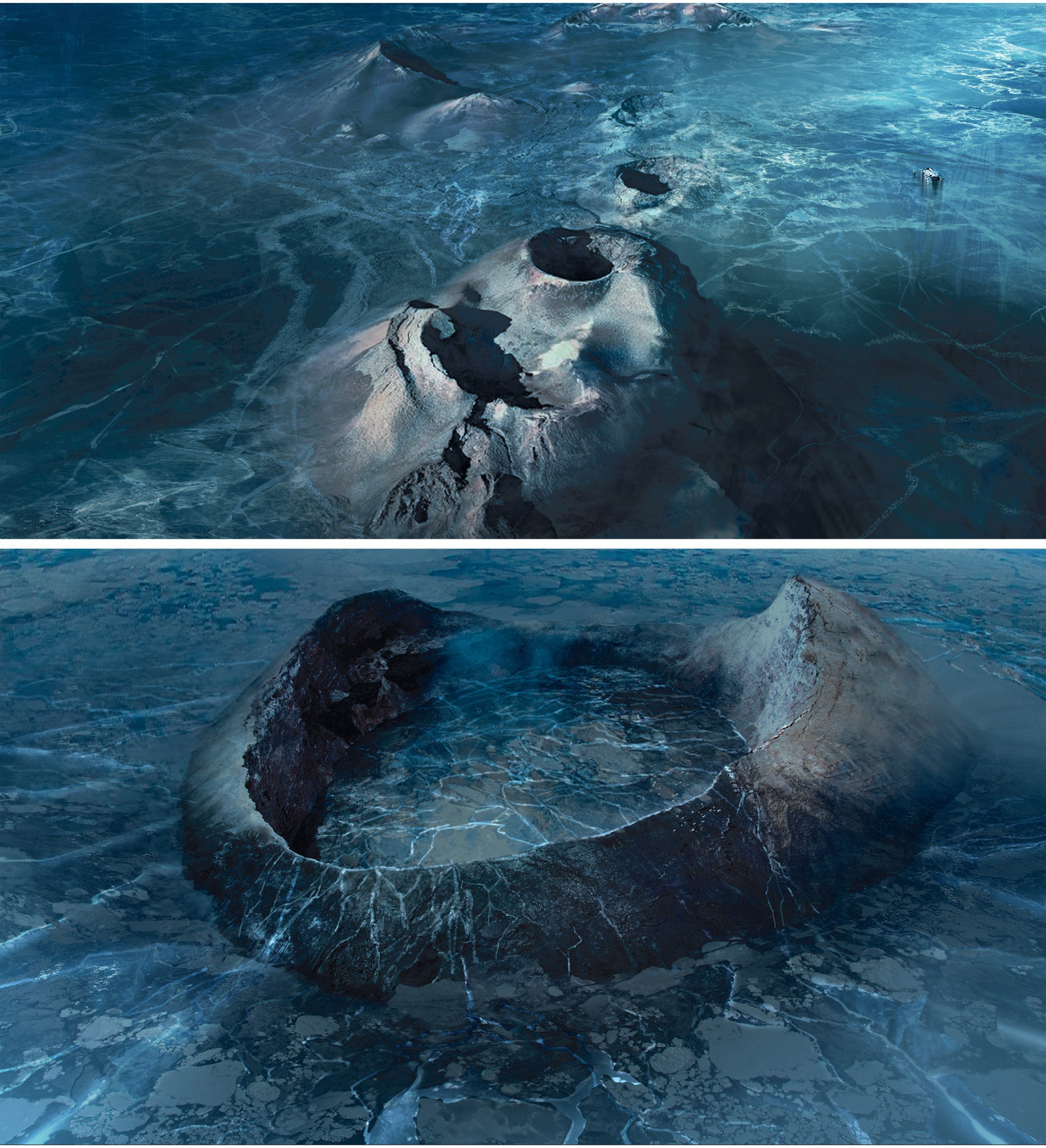
JM: These are explorations of the shapes that would be unique to the ice worlds.



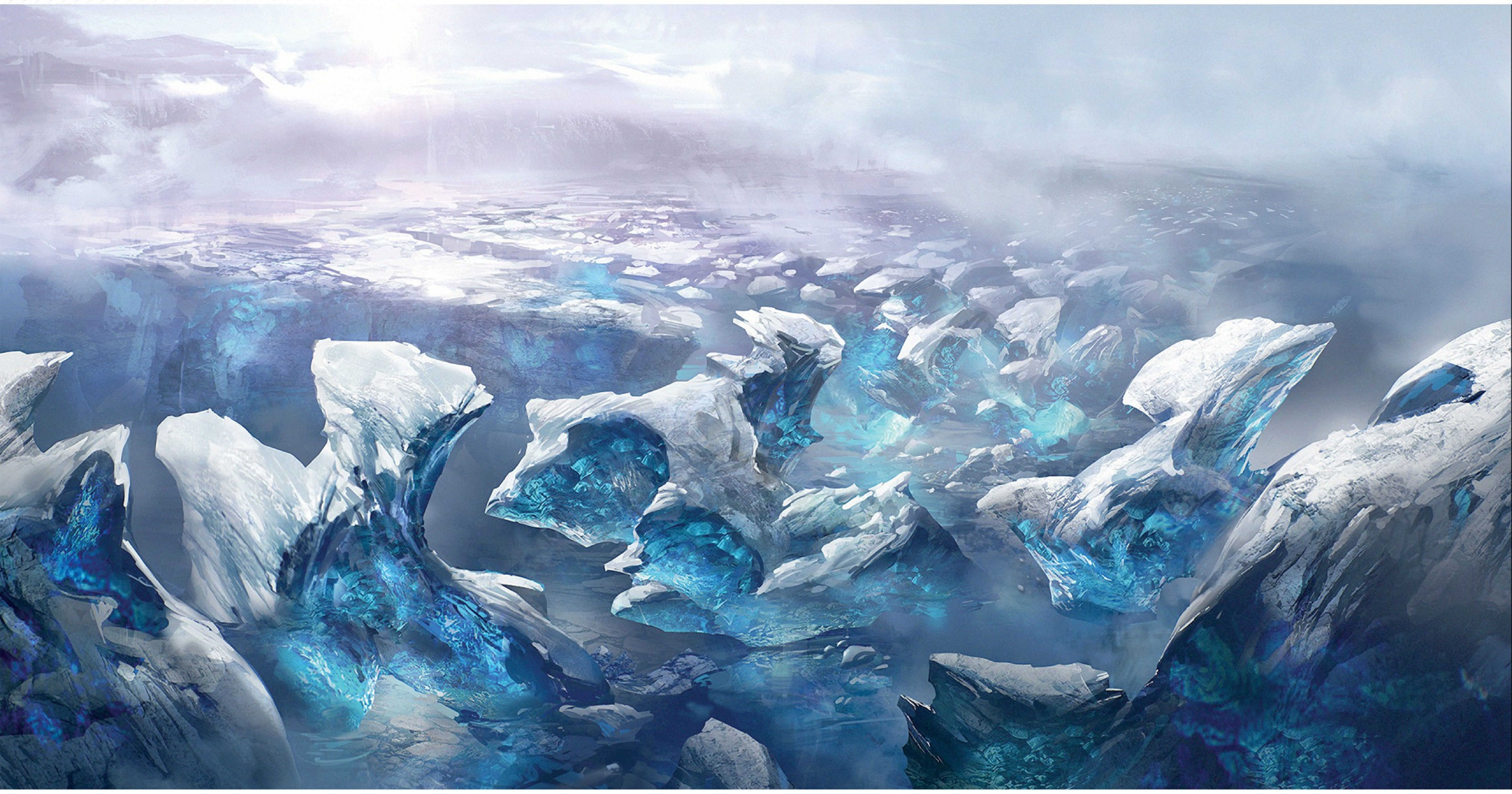


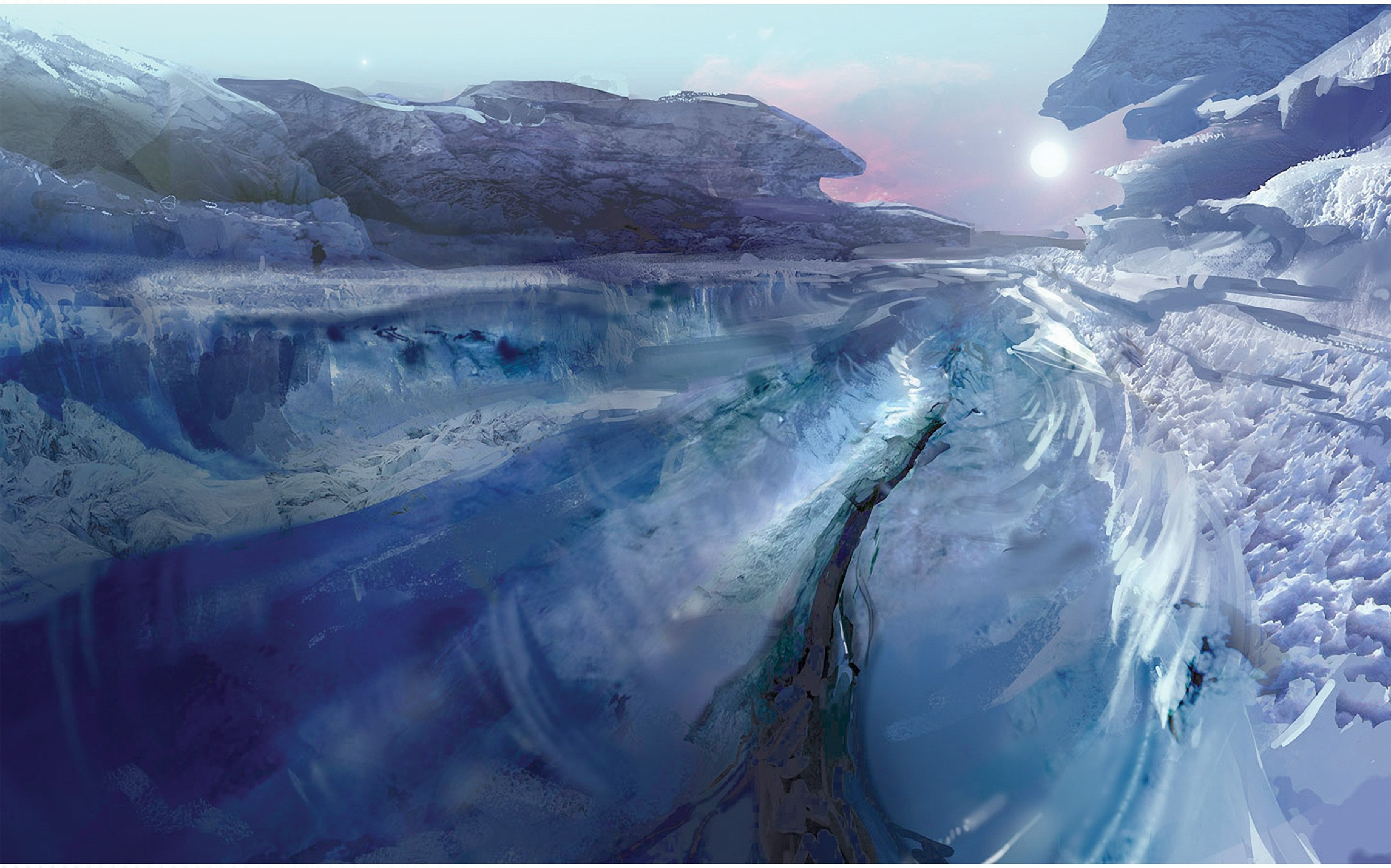
JM: We've seen a lot of ice planets in science fiction. We really wanted to do something a bit different with ours and to see what it'd look like under a different lighting condition. The nighttime setting allowed us to play up interesting "underlighting" and use auroras in the sky.

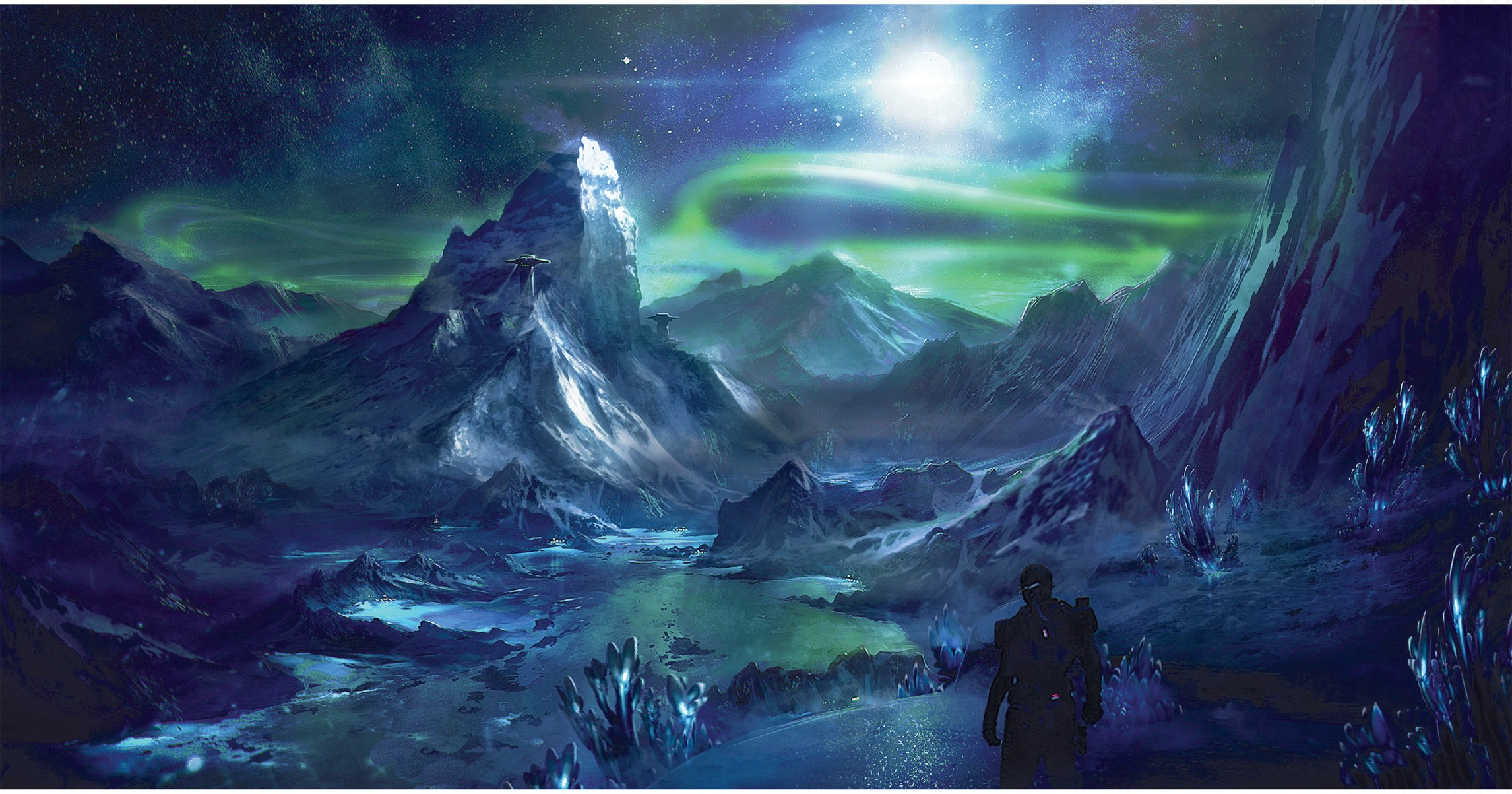


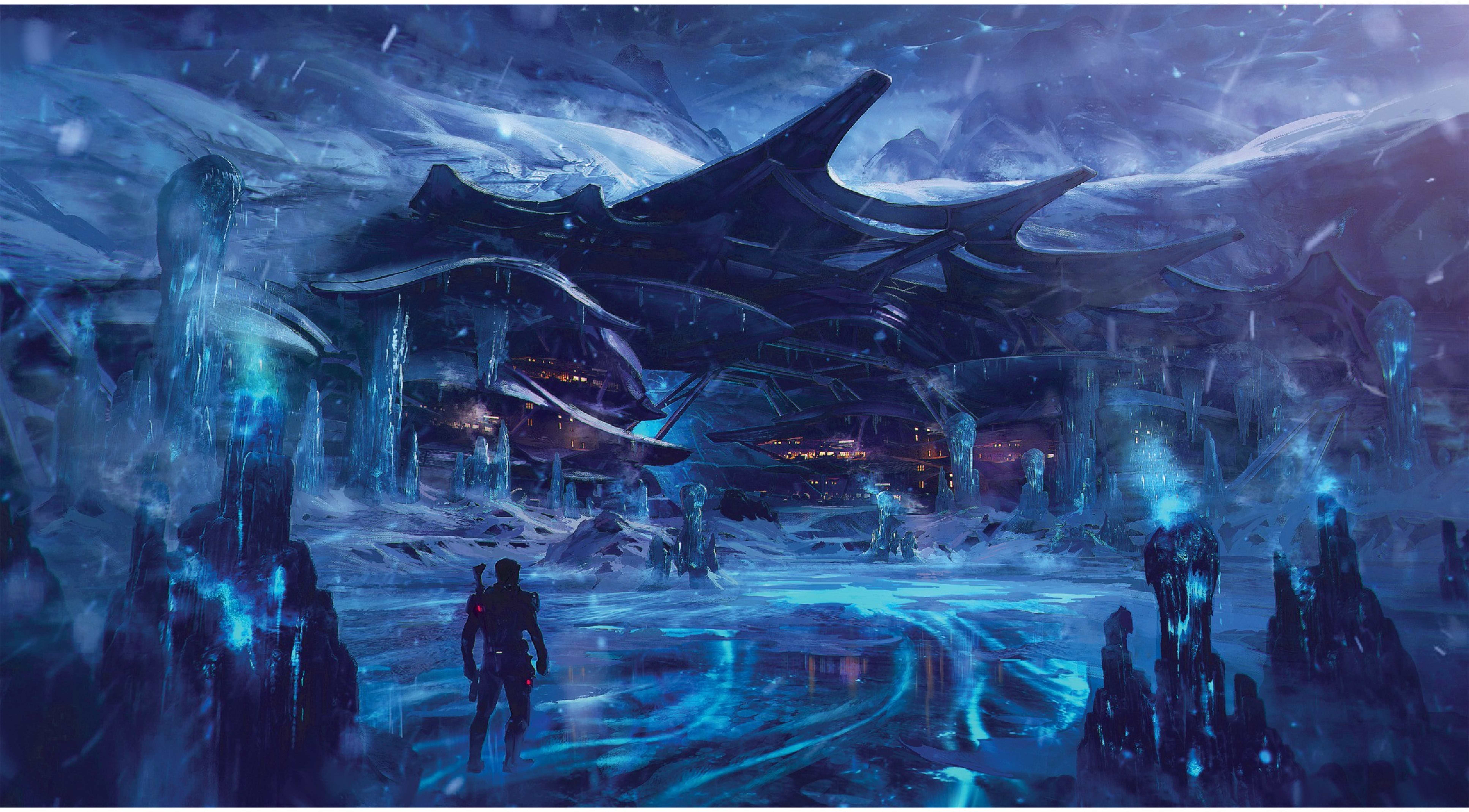


JM: While riffing on the idea of elements beneath the surface, we tried playing around with the concept of a crater half-exposed through the ice. This created an interesting ridge or crown, through which icy currents would flow.

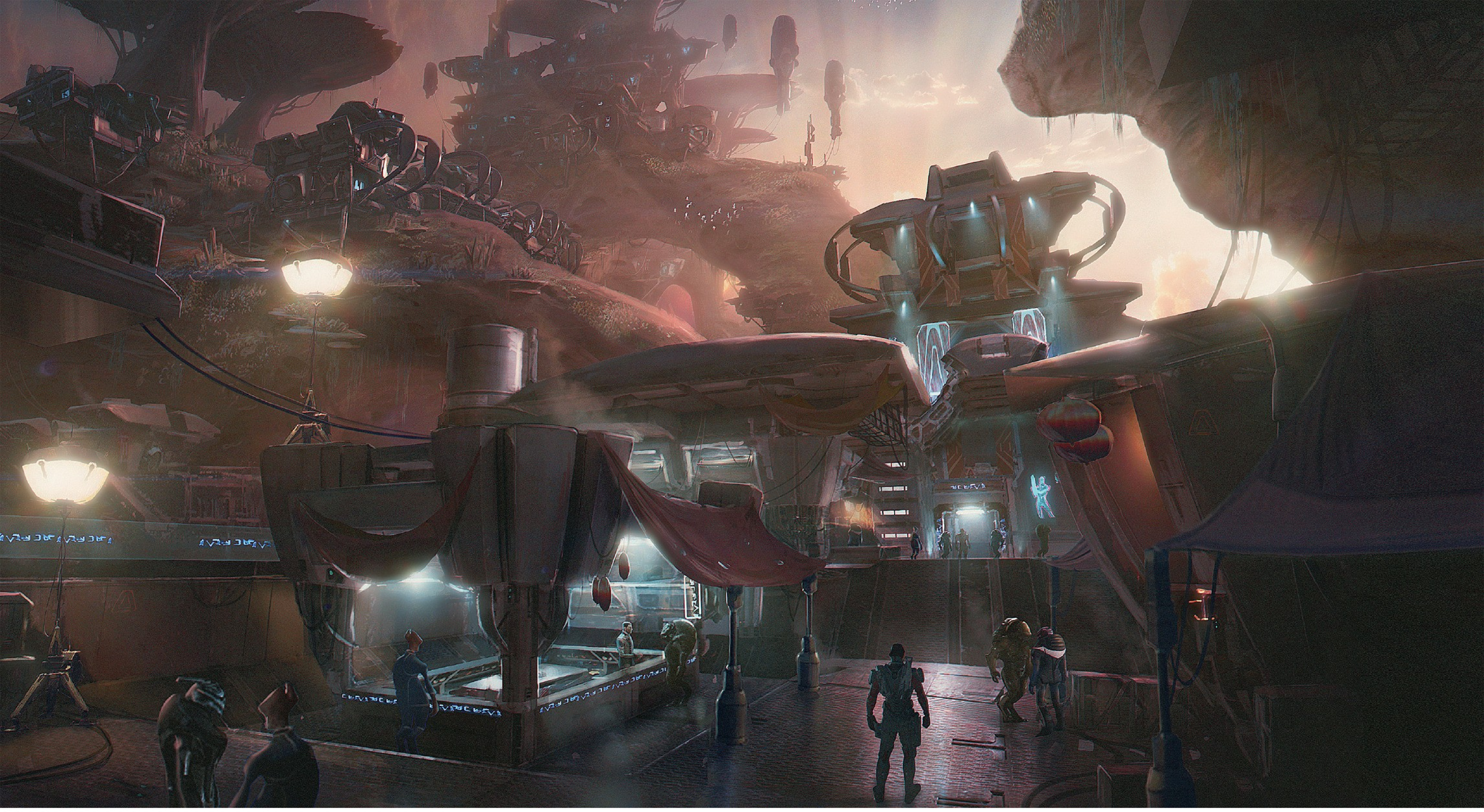


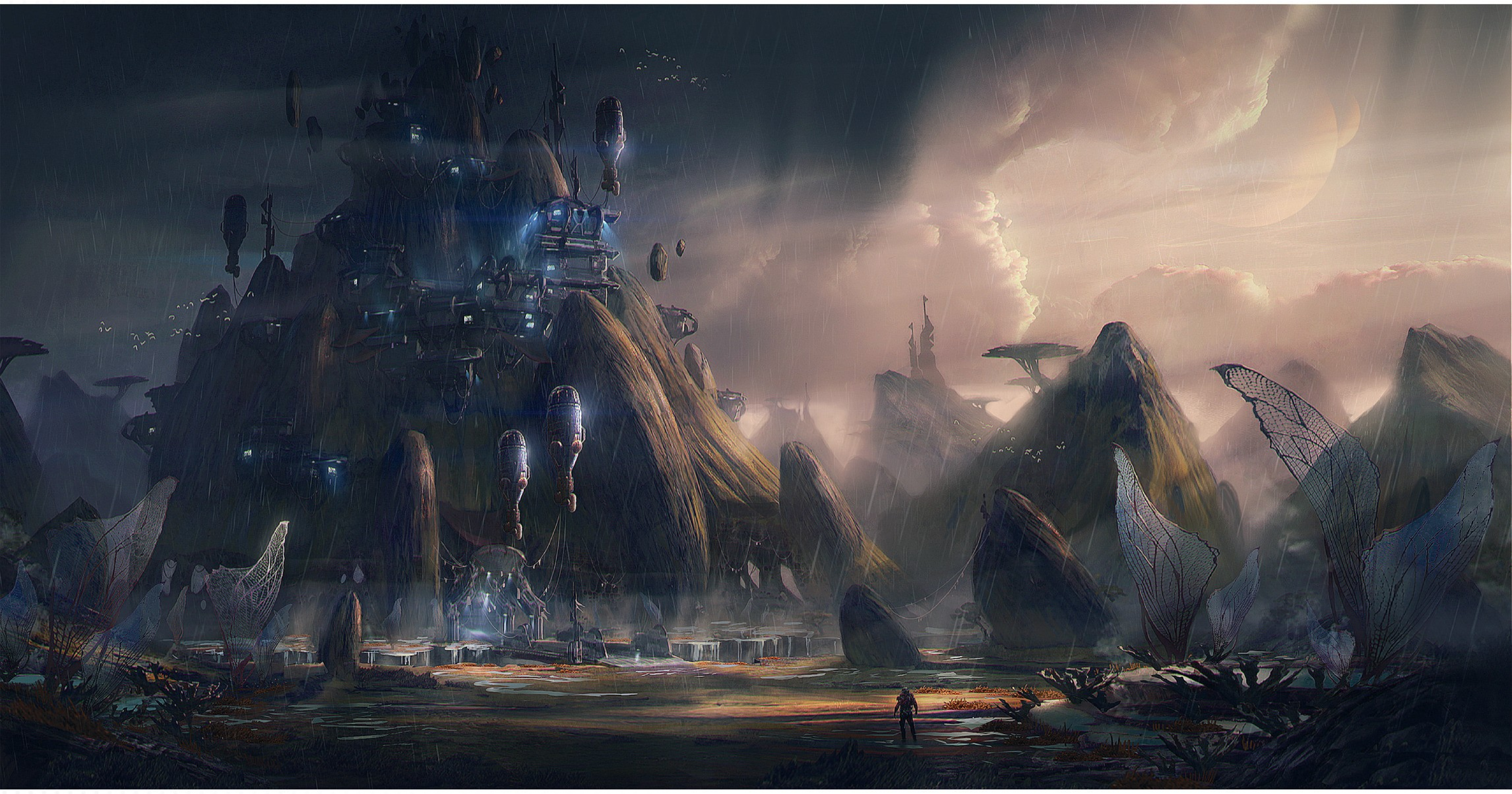






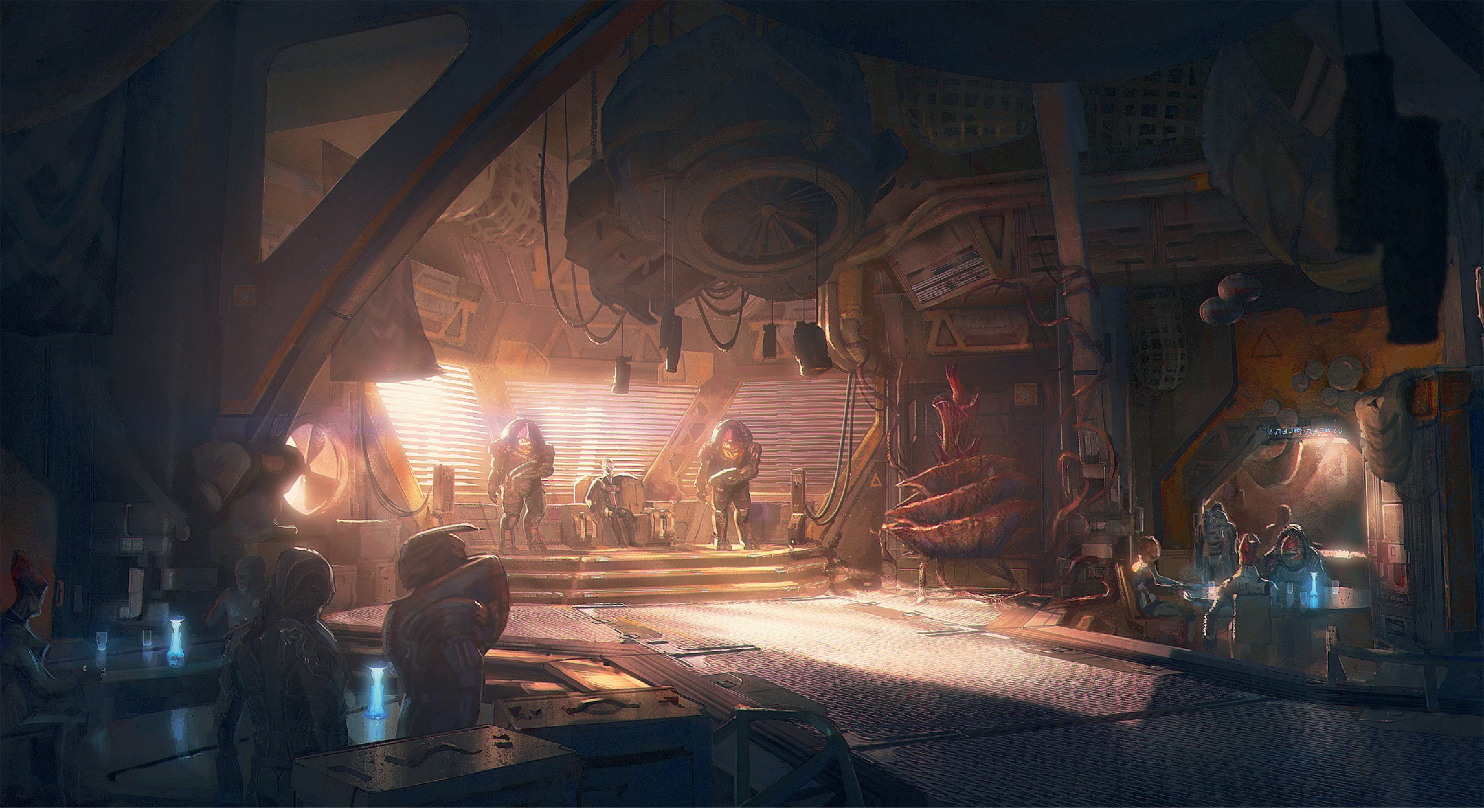
KF: One theme that was important to carry through all of the locations was the idea that outposts need to be integrated into the landscape seamlessly. It was important that nothing looked awkwardly placed on top of environmental elements, but rather appeared to be built in, with forethought and intention. Storytelling is key to how and where these locations would be built in order to ensure nothing appeared arbitrarily placed.

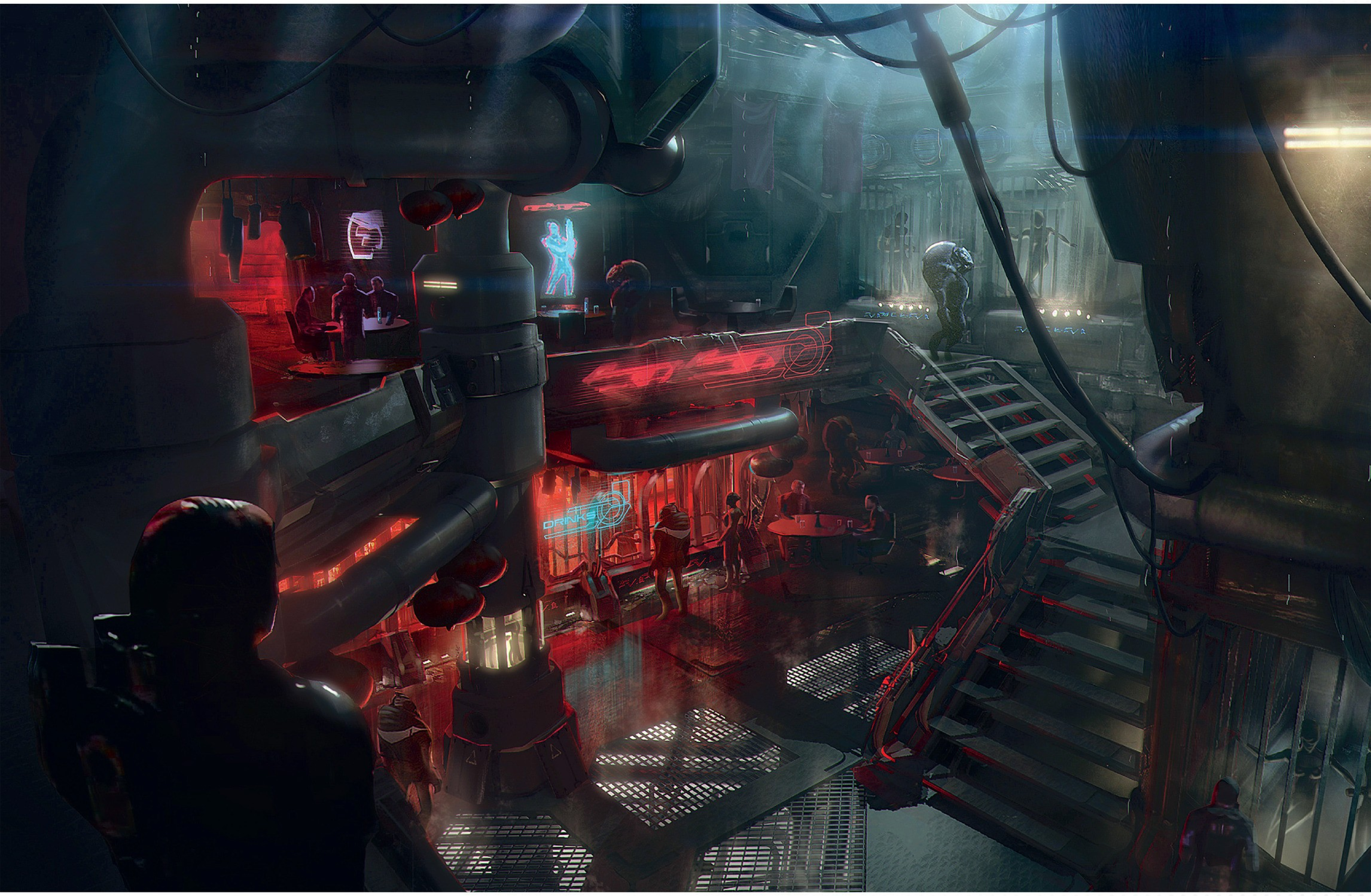


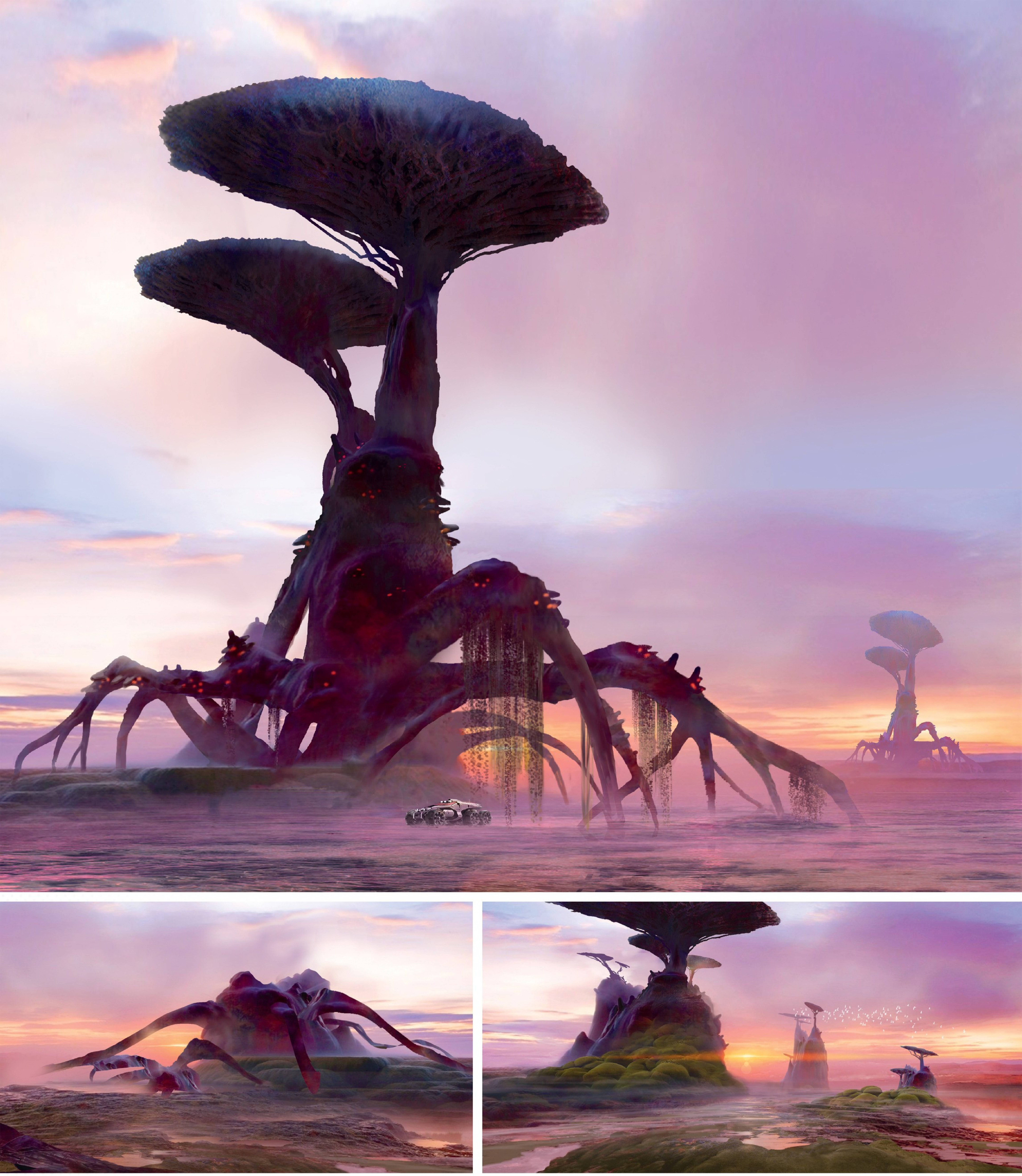


KADARA

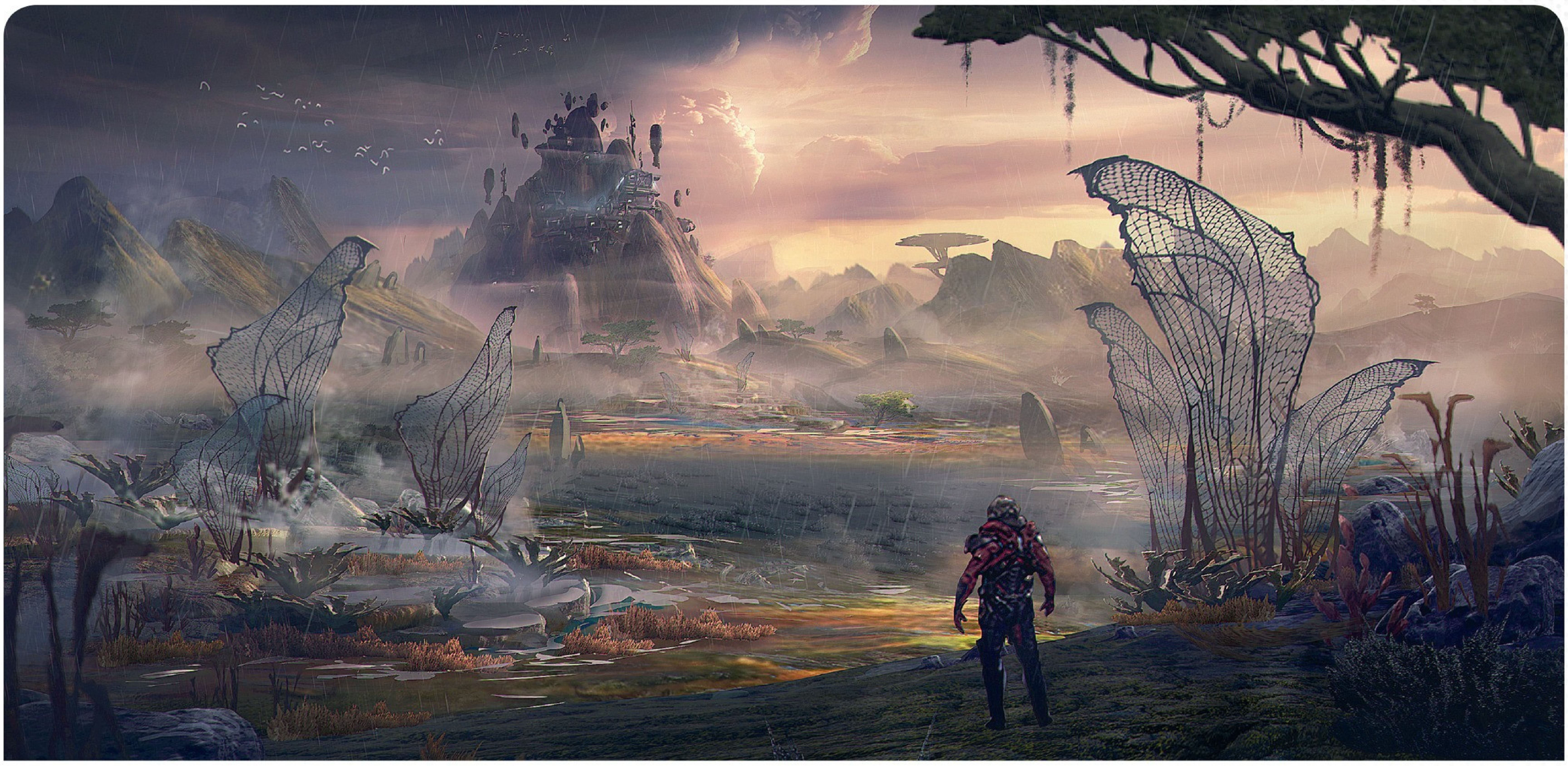
KF: I have a personal affinity for Kadara, as it was the first location I had the privilege of lending my efforts to after joining the project. It also has a personality that differs from other locations in *Andromeda*. Kadara is one of the more unique outpost areas, as well as one of *Andromeda*'s most dangerous locations. While the danger in other locations comes from their hostile environments, Kadara Port is a hive for criminals and other undesirables. If you are looking for back-alley deals or mercenaries for hire, look no further than Kadara Port.

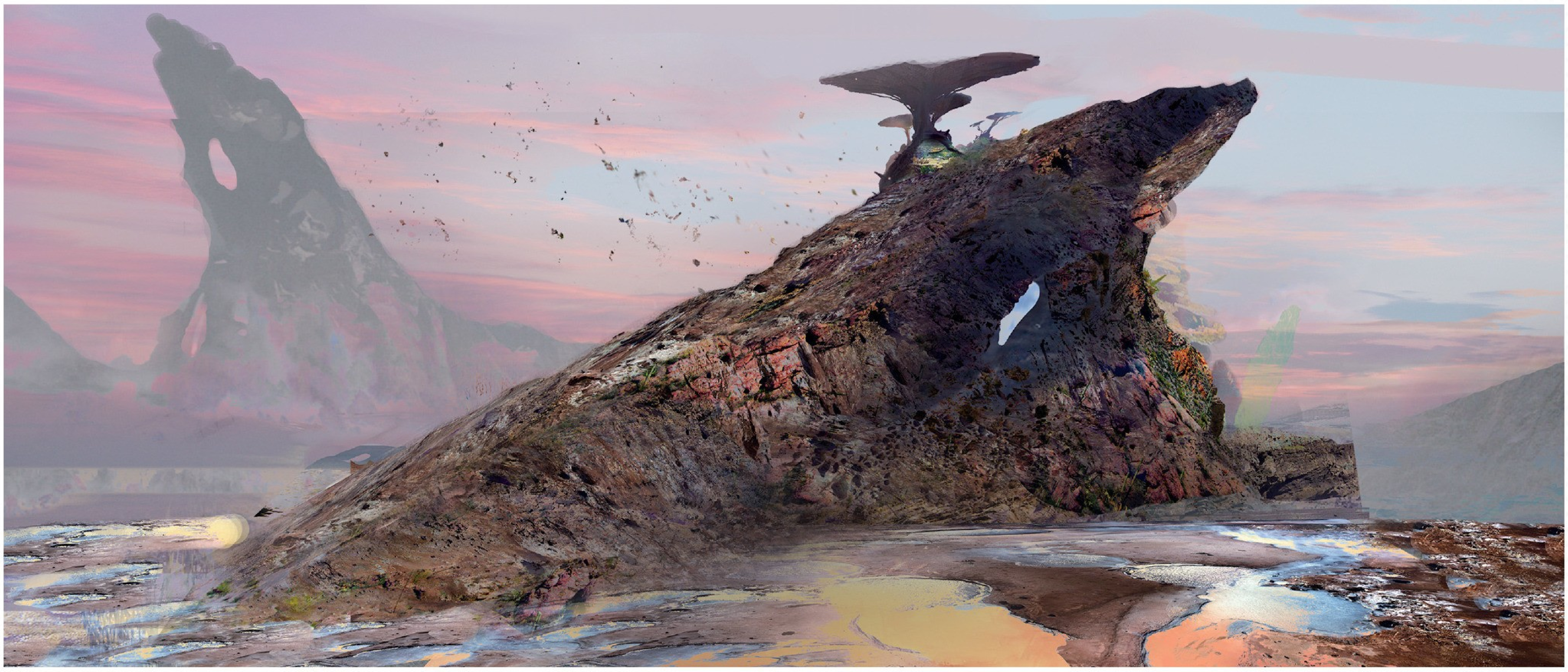


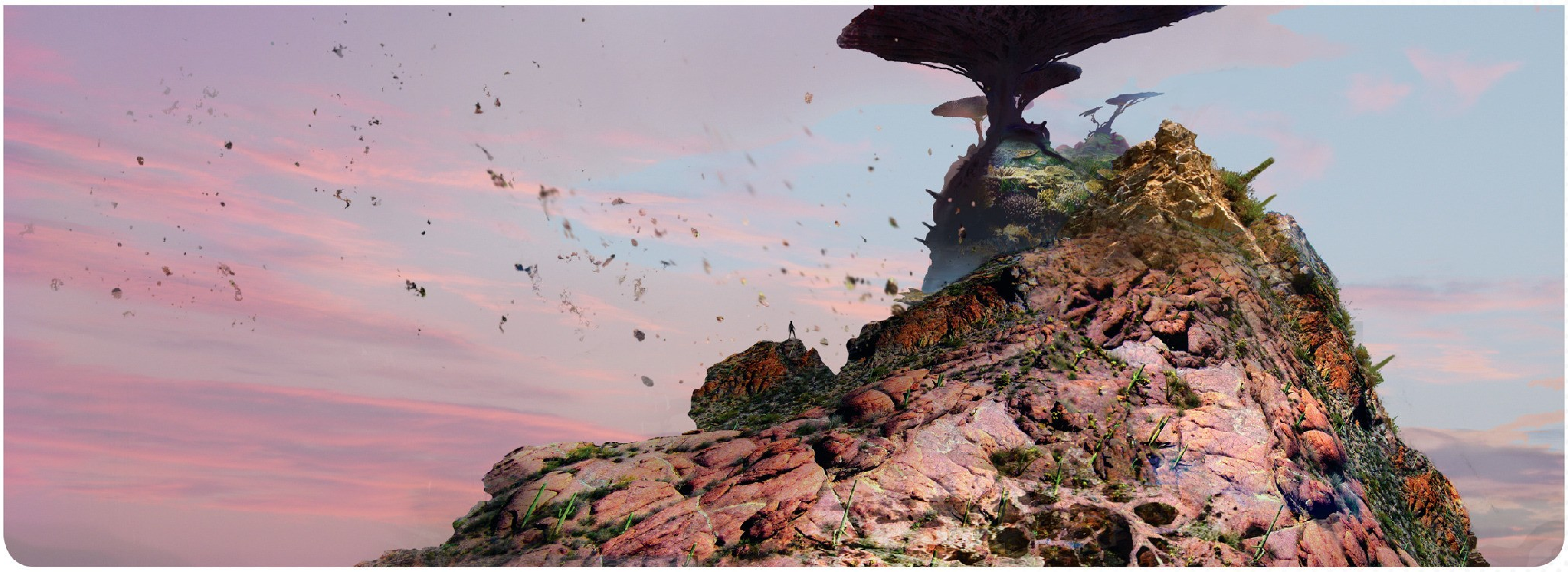

DRINKS

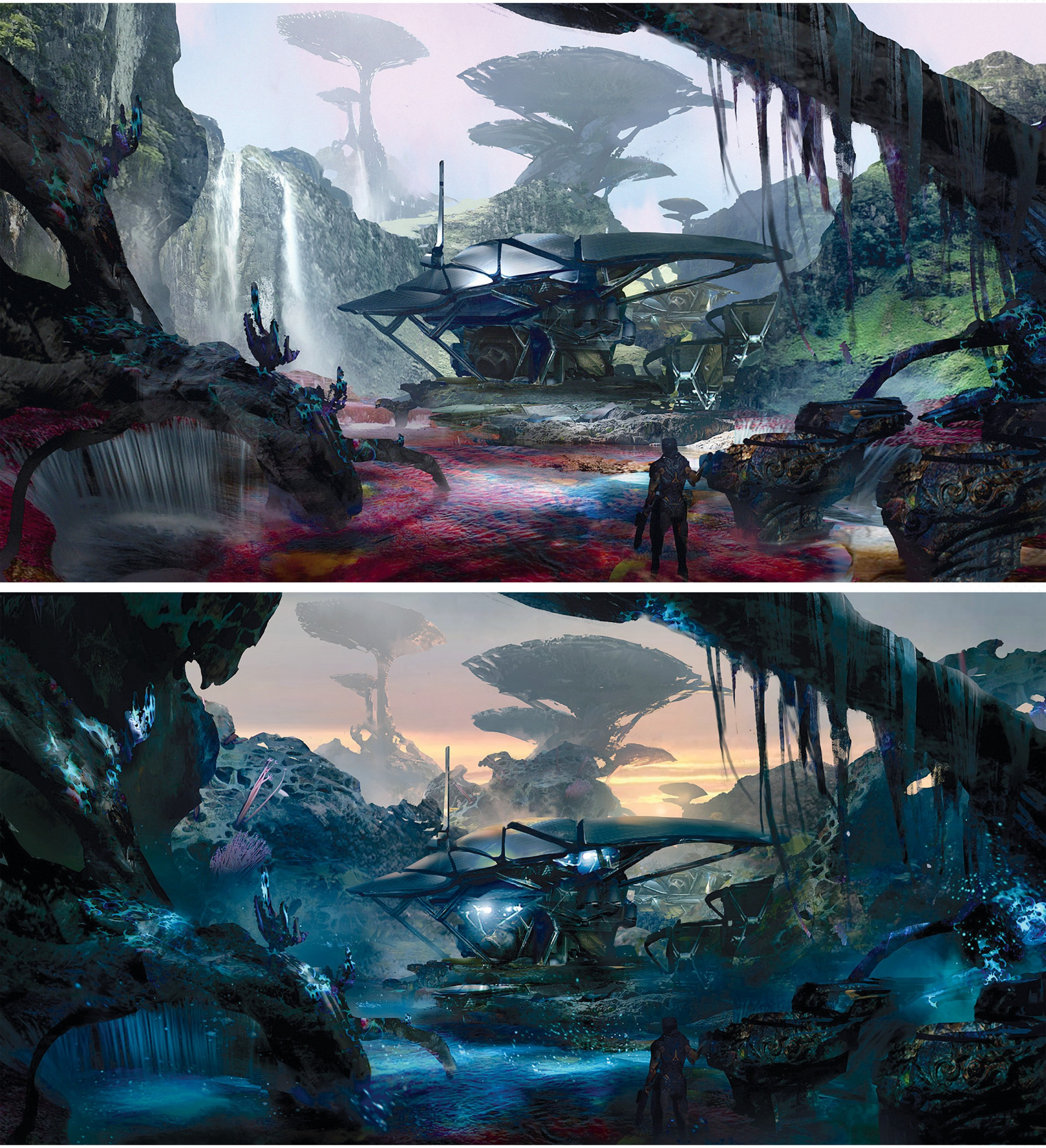


JM: This is an early exploration of Kadara. We were trying to find unique elements and shapes. The flora on this planet was originally meant to be coral-like, possibly implying that the world was once covered in water.

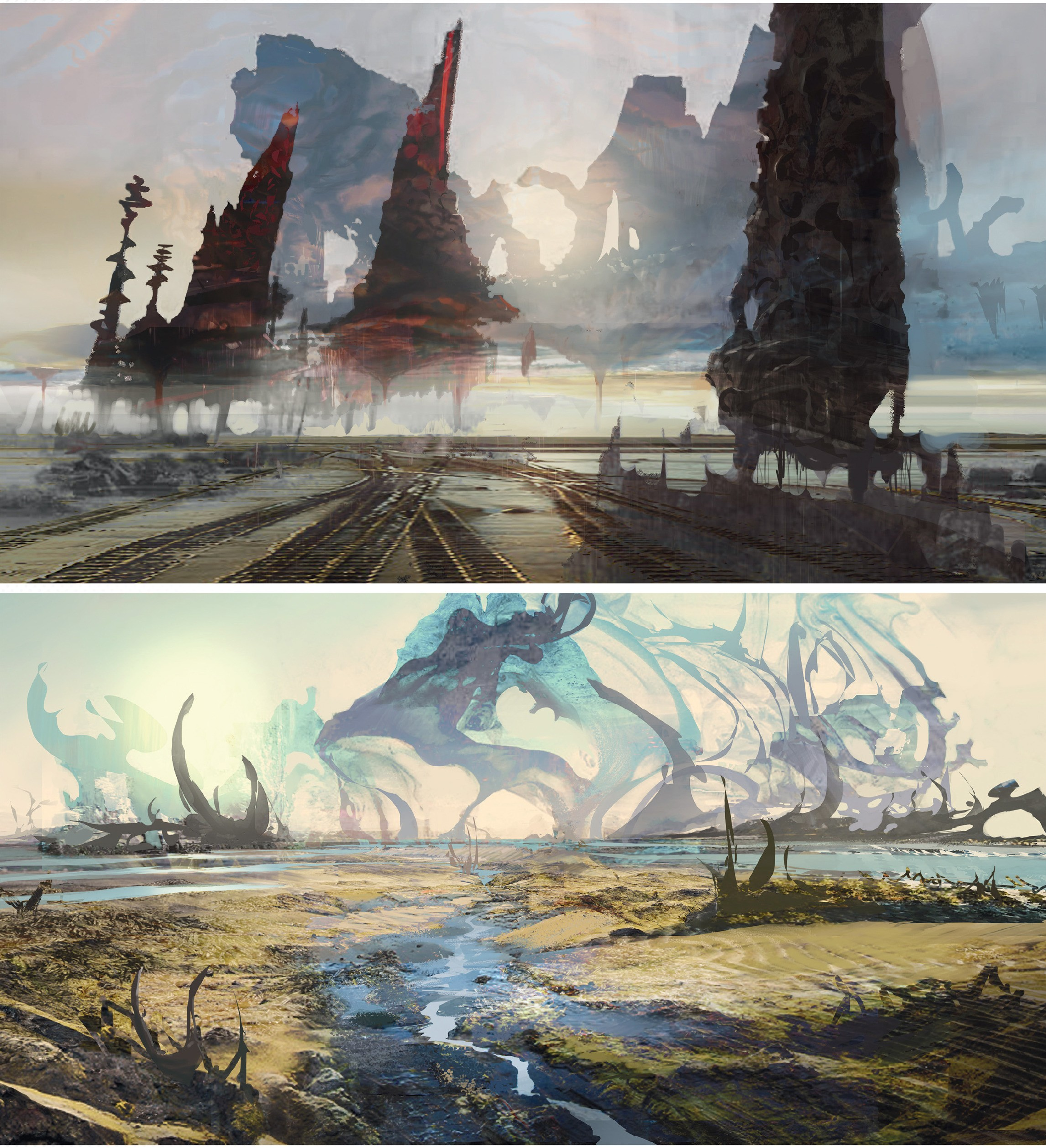




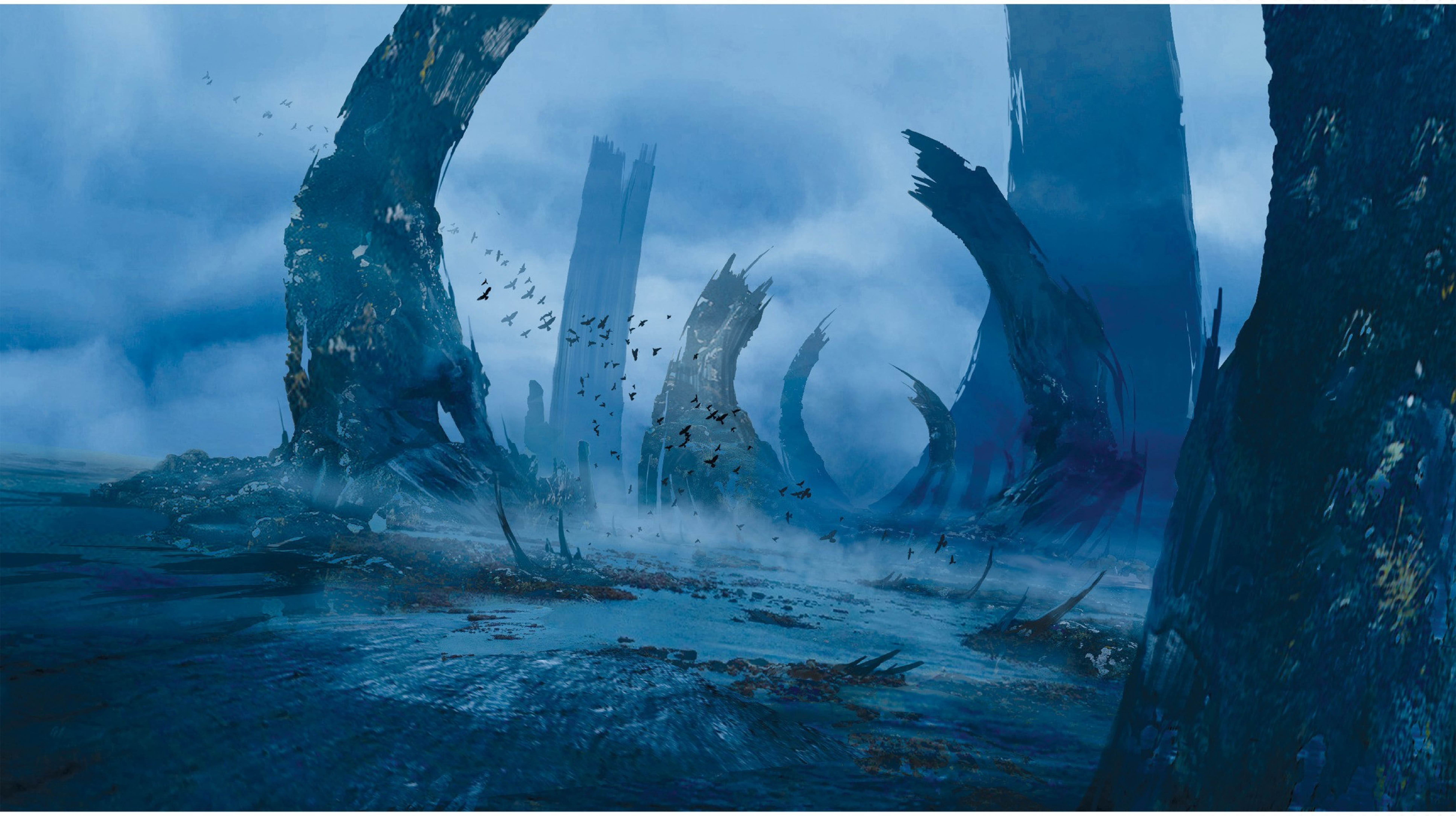


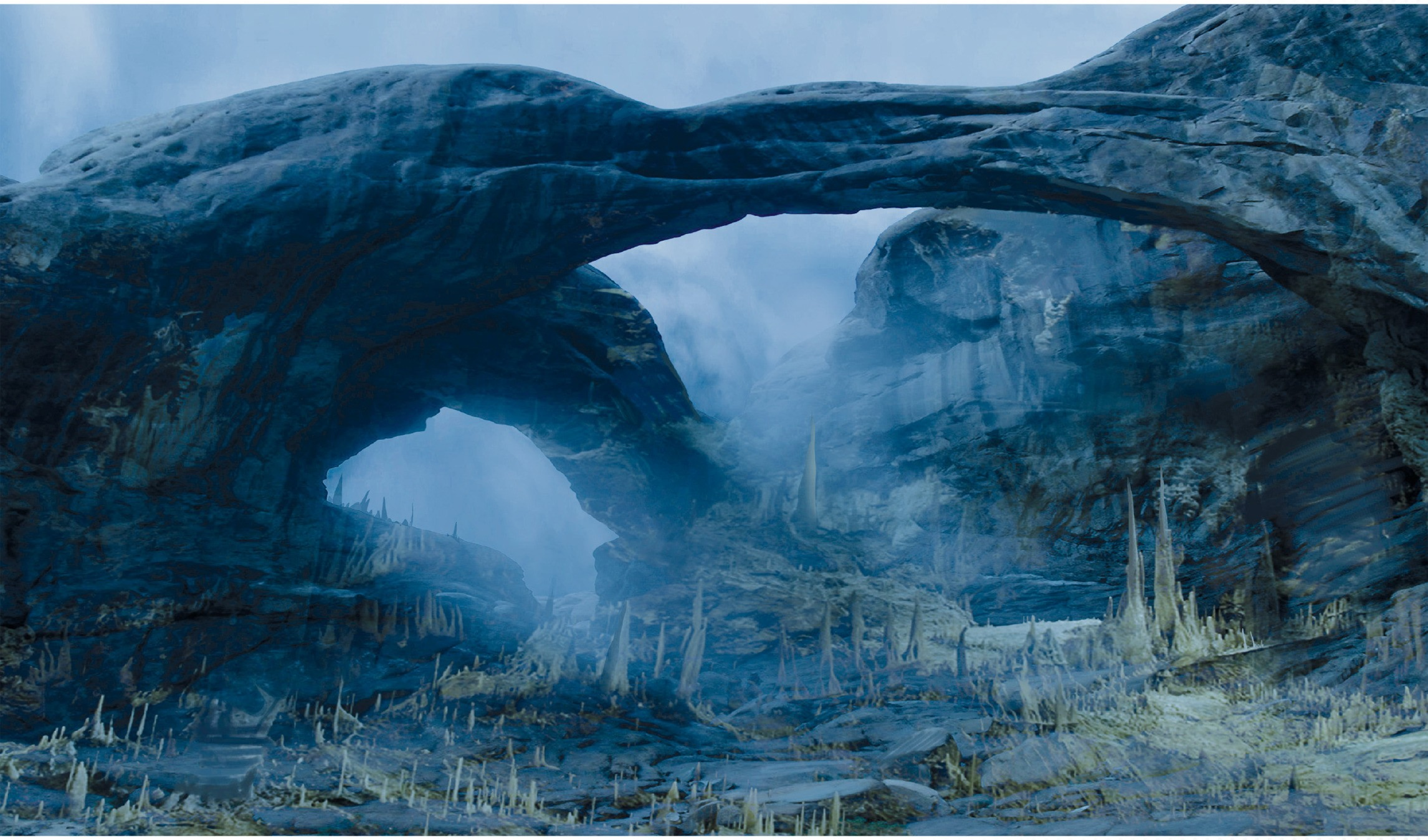


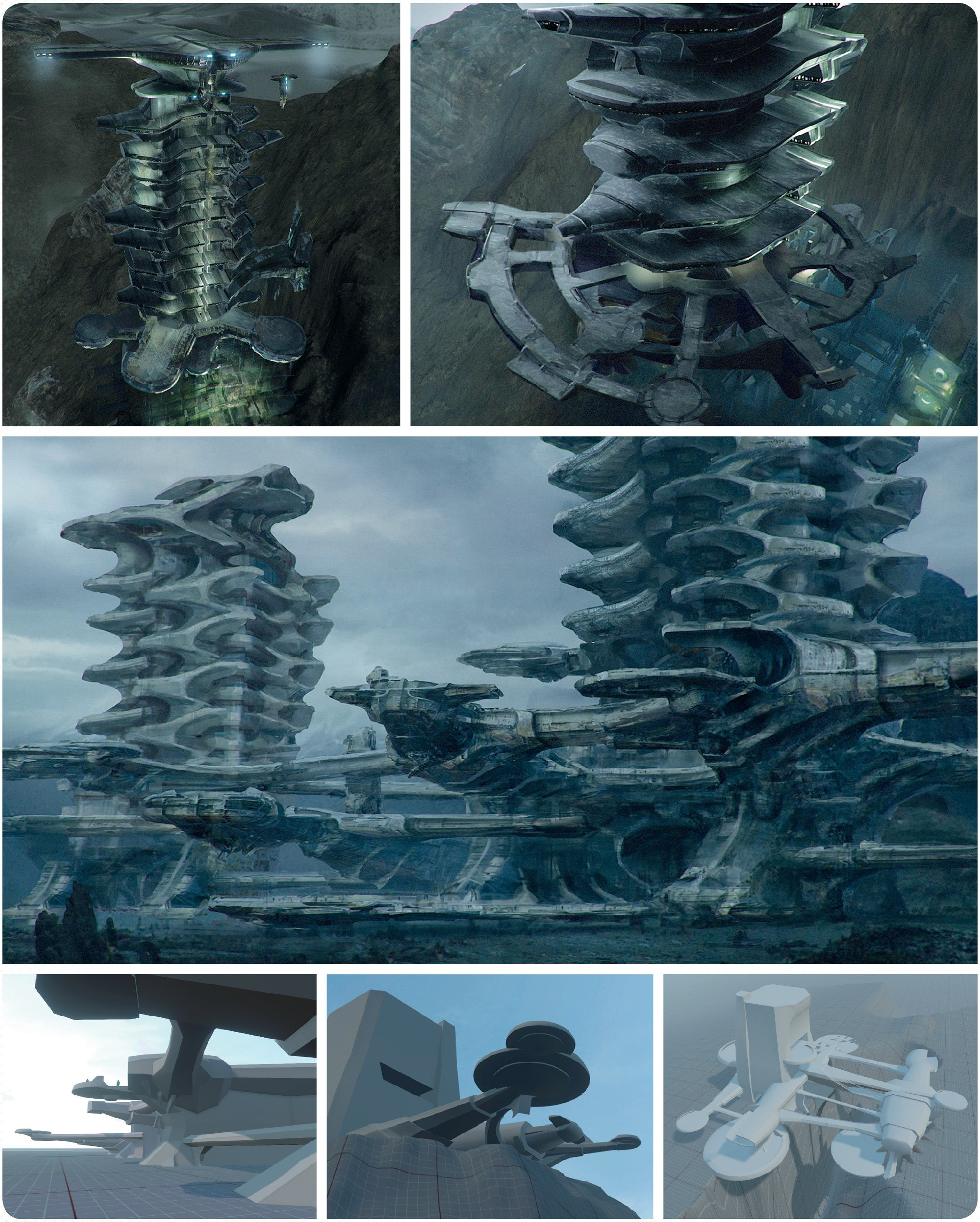
JM: Daytime and dusk settings for Jaal's loyalty mission. We decided to shift the time of day to be dusk, since it would give us a better opportunity to play up the bioluminescent matte with the plants, insects, and features of the surroundings.



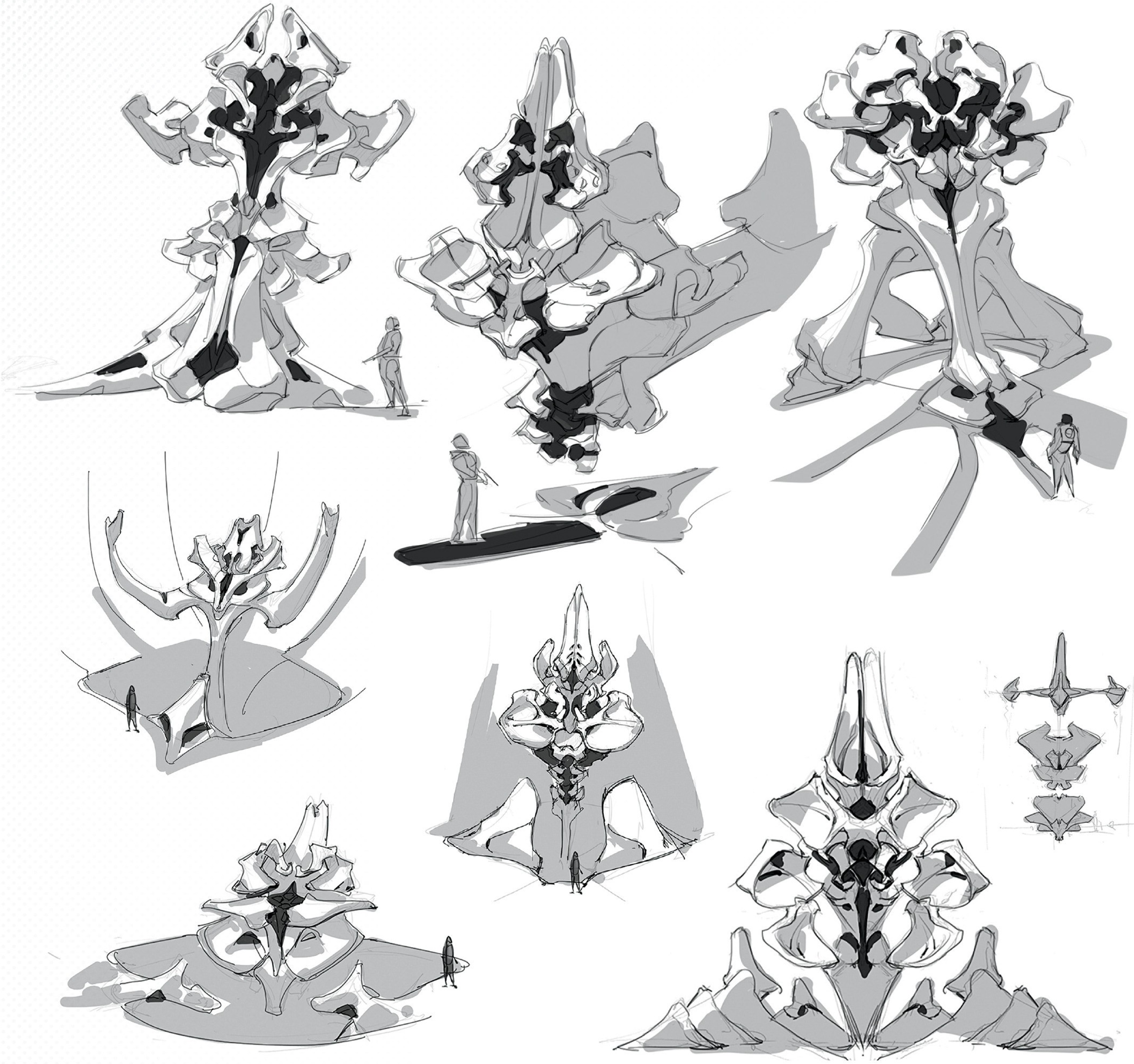
JM: This was some early visual development for our “wildcard” planet. I wanted to play with the idea of having shifting gravity, which would create a lot of upheaval in the geographic evolution.

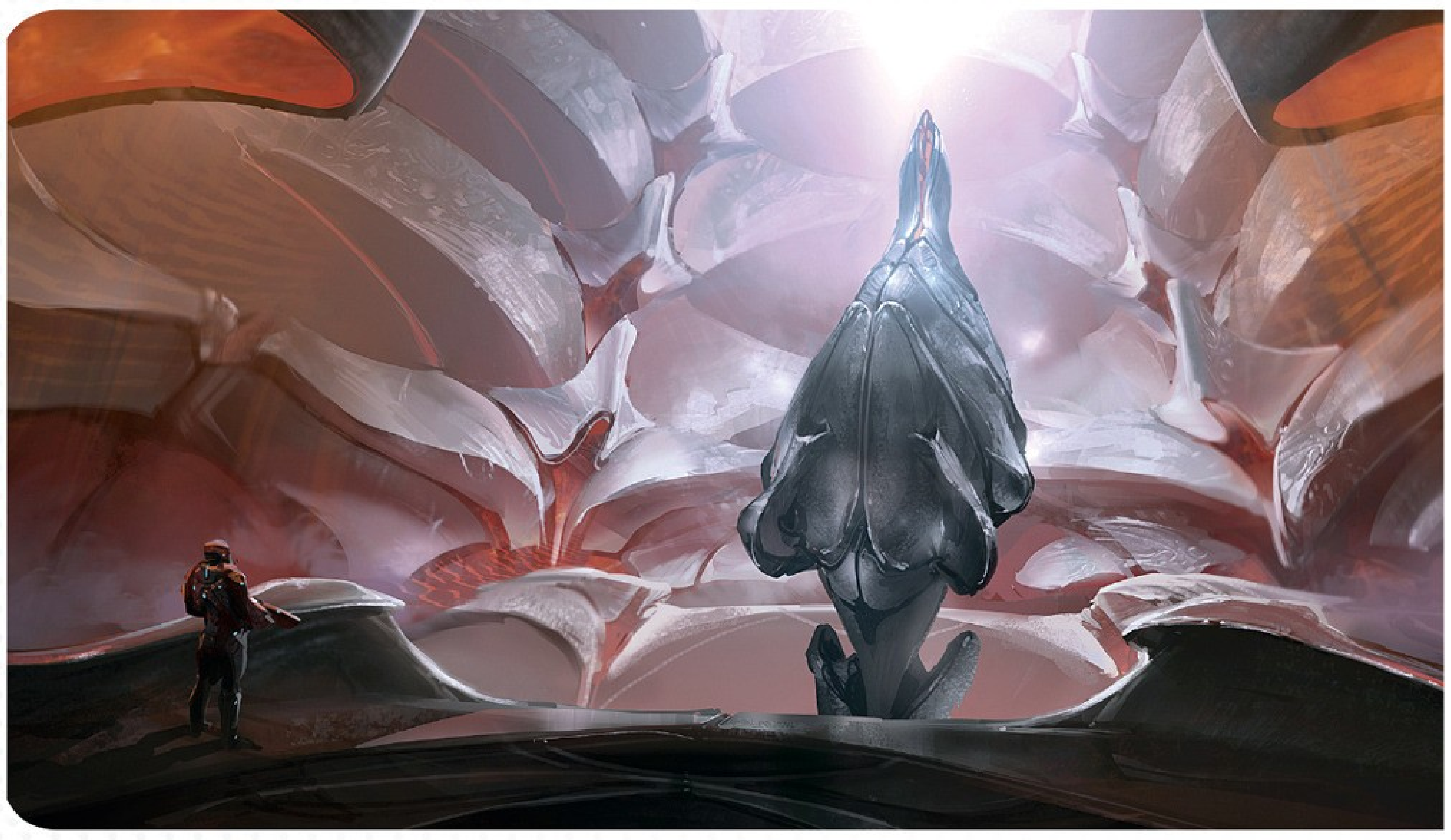


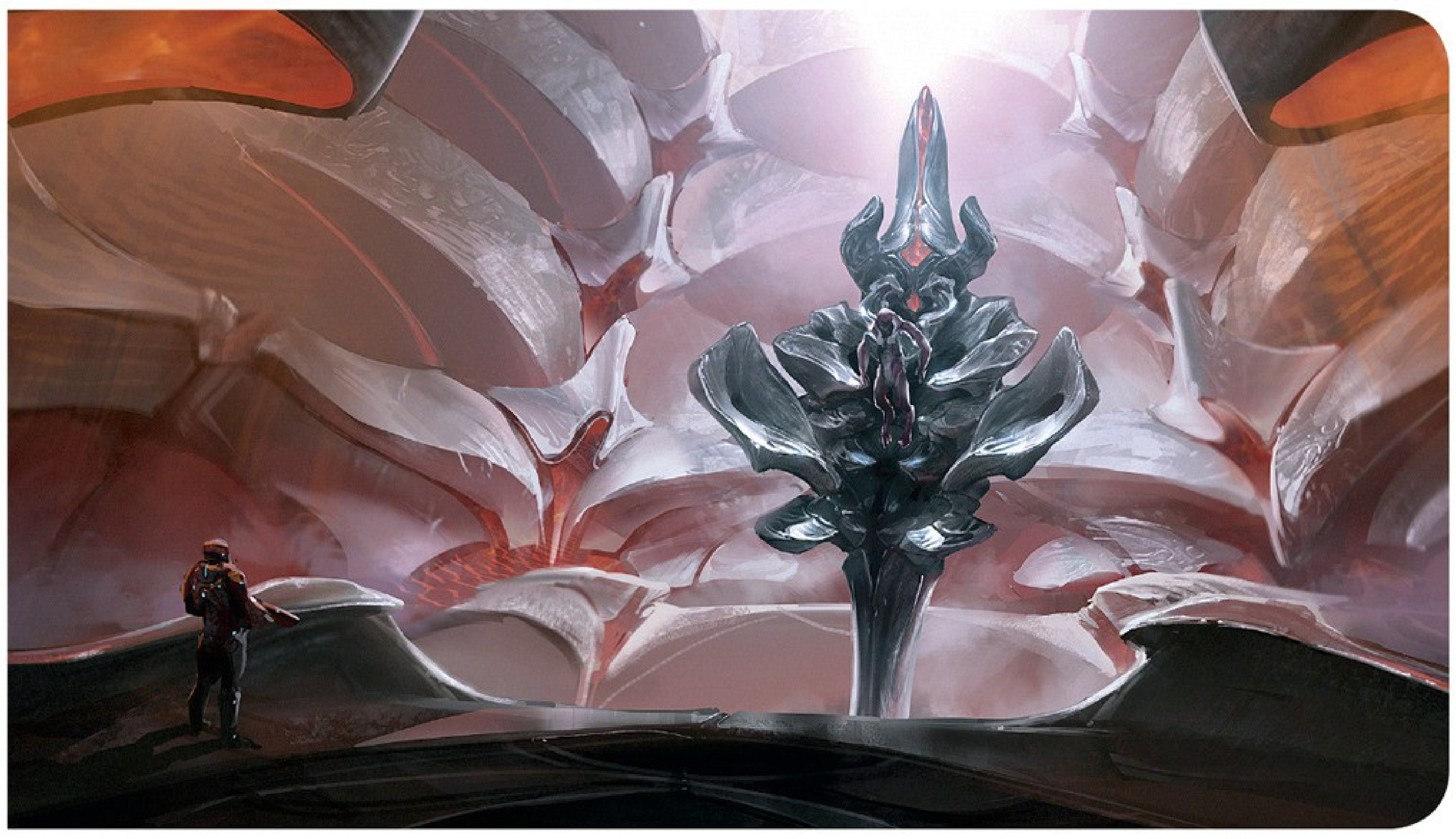


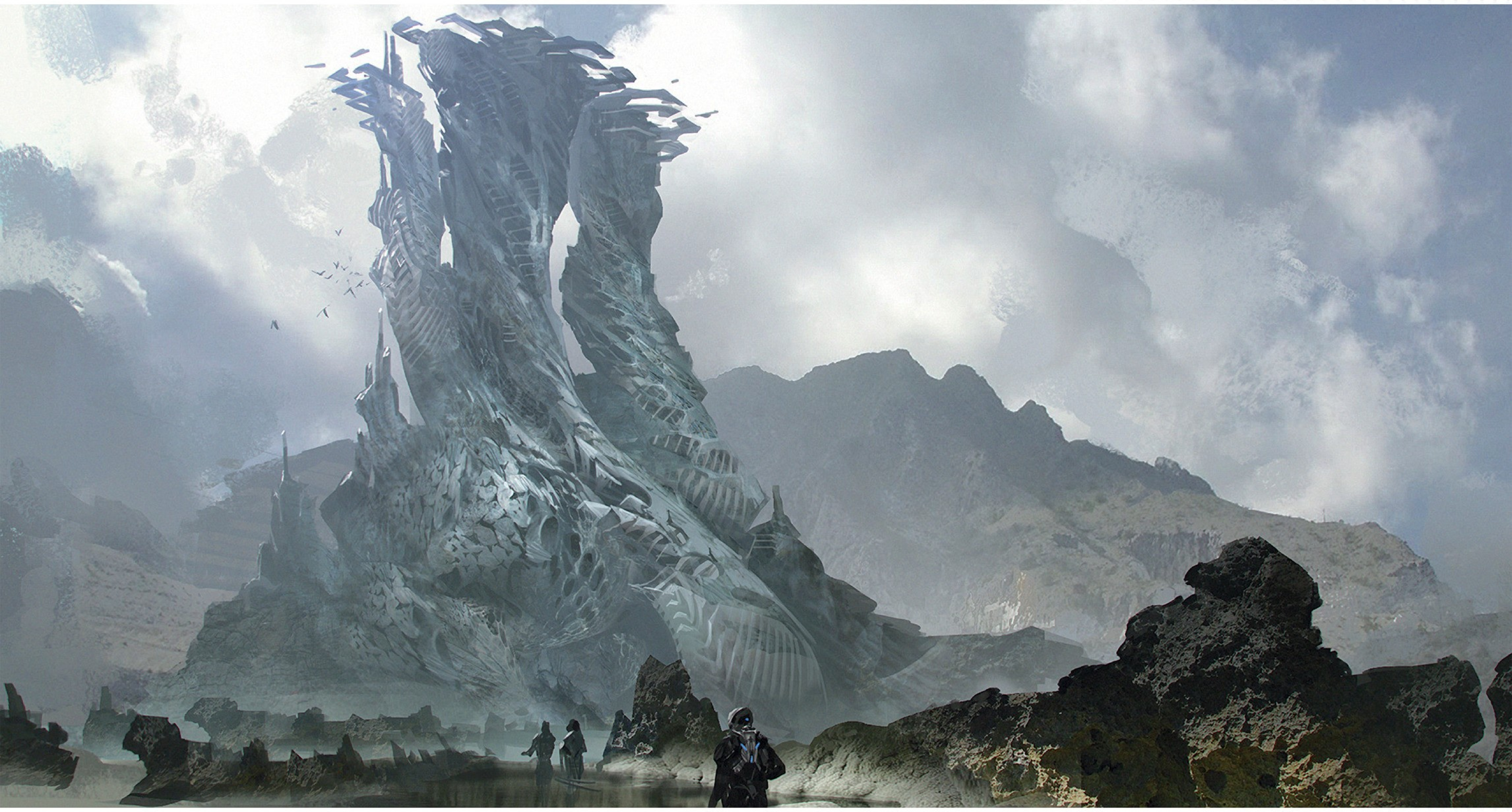


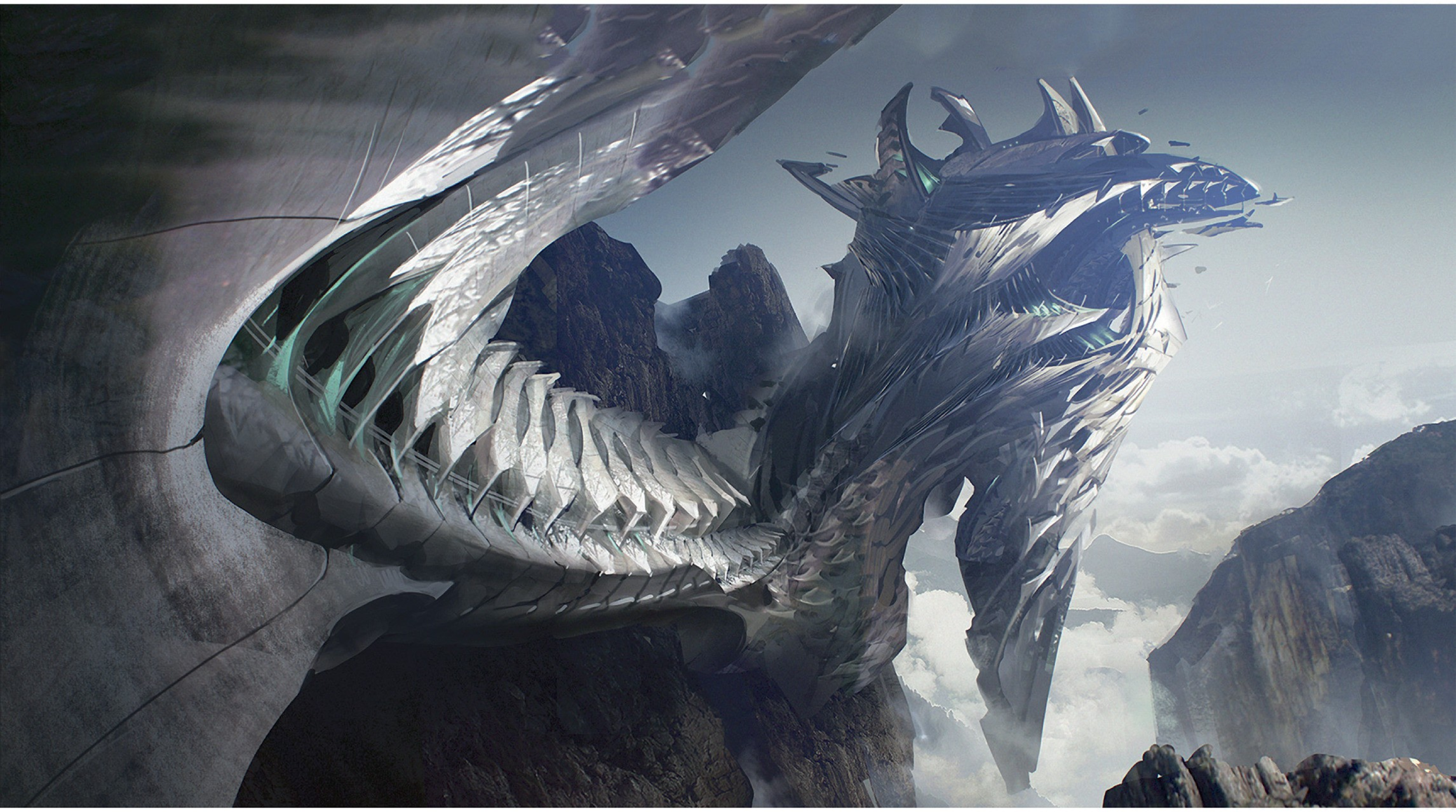
SB: The kett architecture went through multiple iterations, until we finally found the right balance between NeoBrutalism and contemporary.



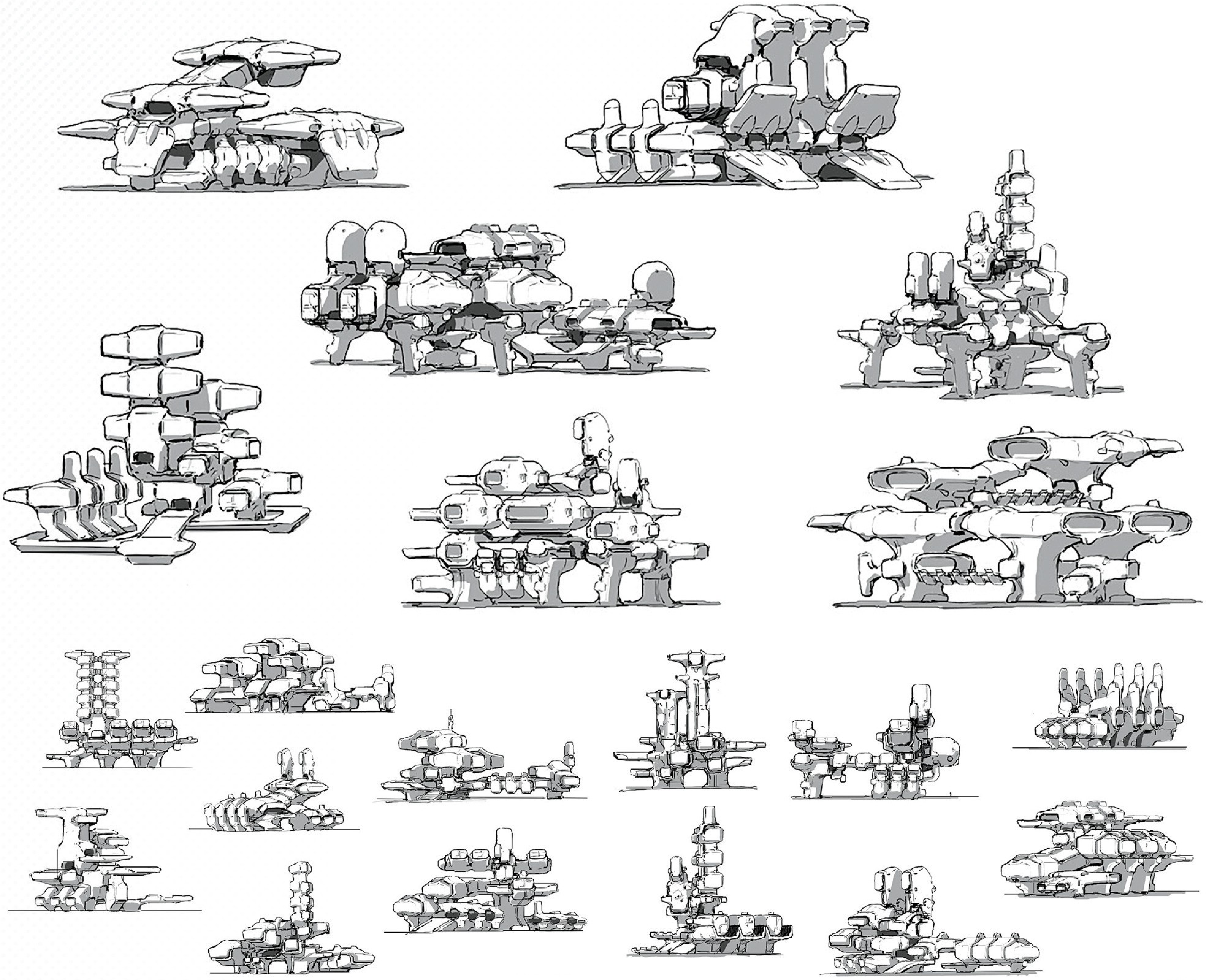


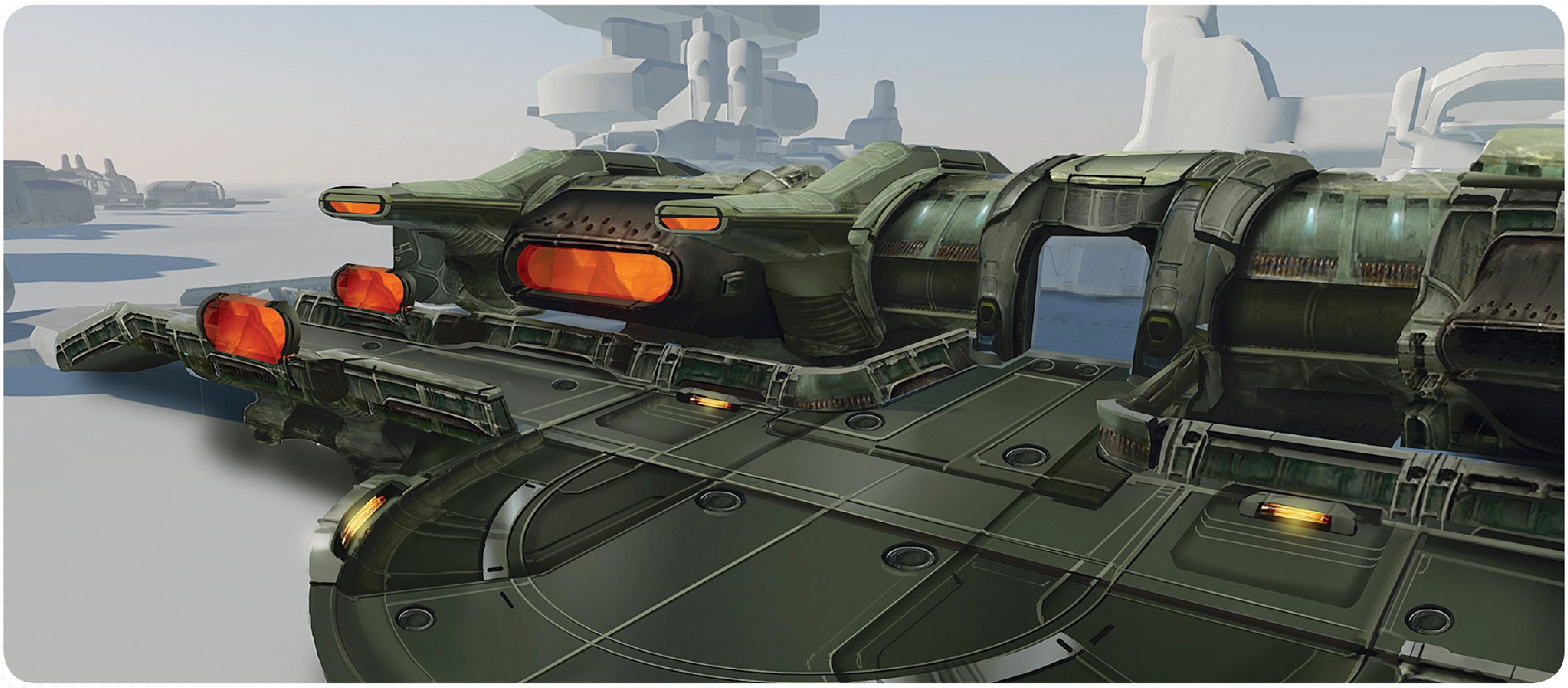




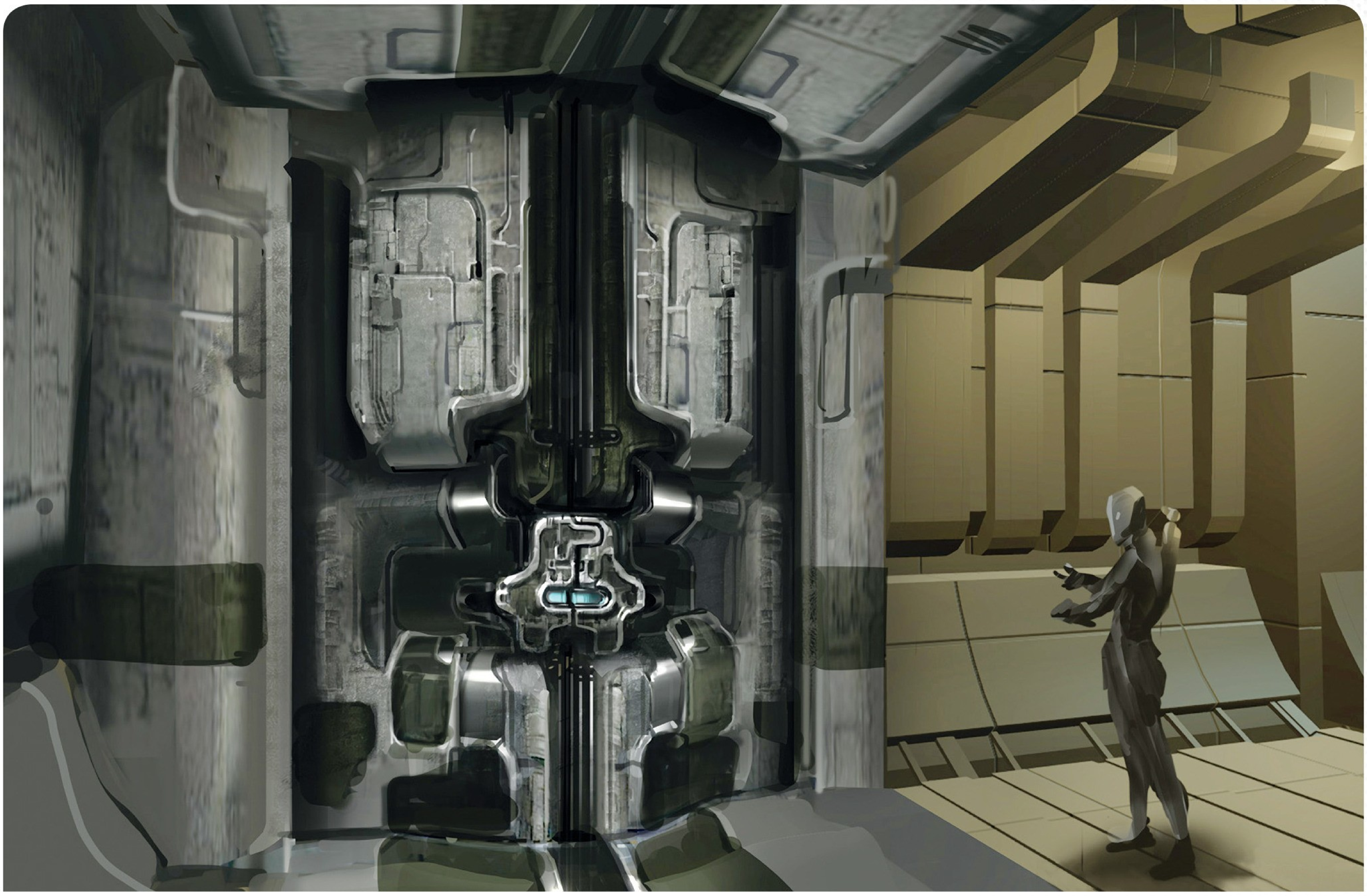


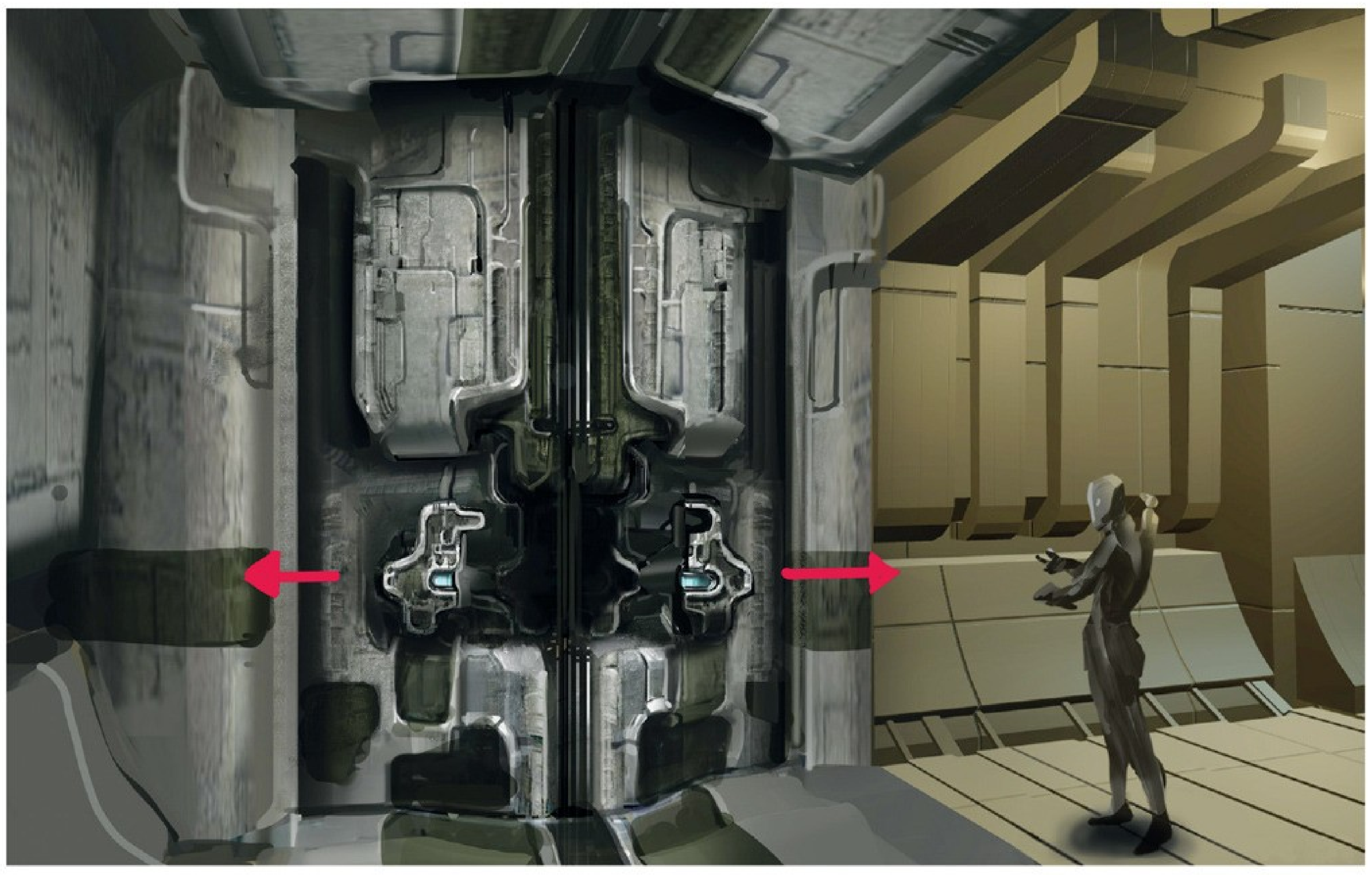
BL: This was one of the early directions for the kett architecture. We had more flowery and ornate shapes that made up the forms, but we eventually pulled away from that because it didn't have the solid foundation feel that we wanted to get from the kett. They're shown in the game to be more ominous and imposing.

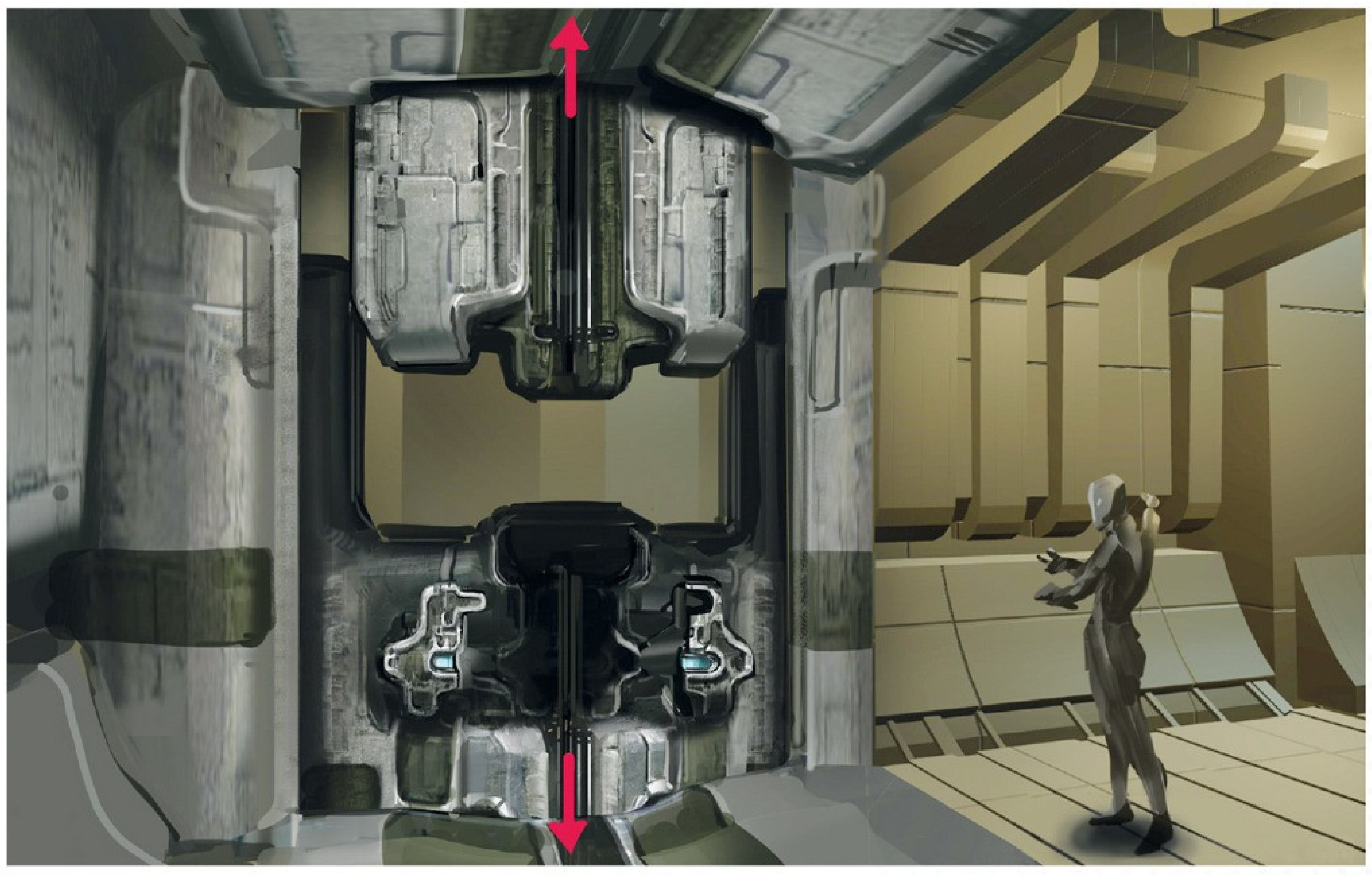


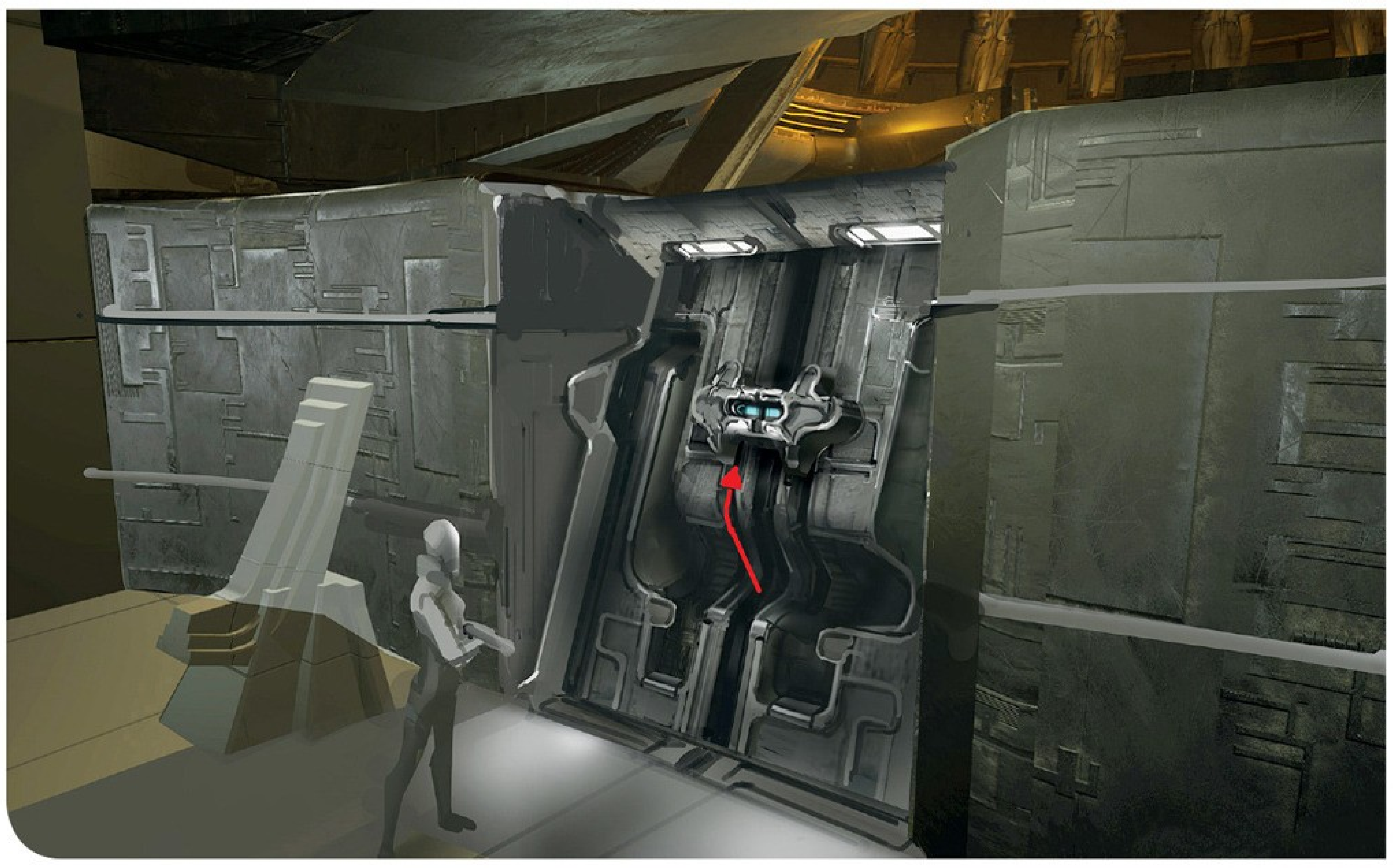


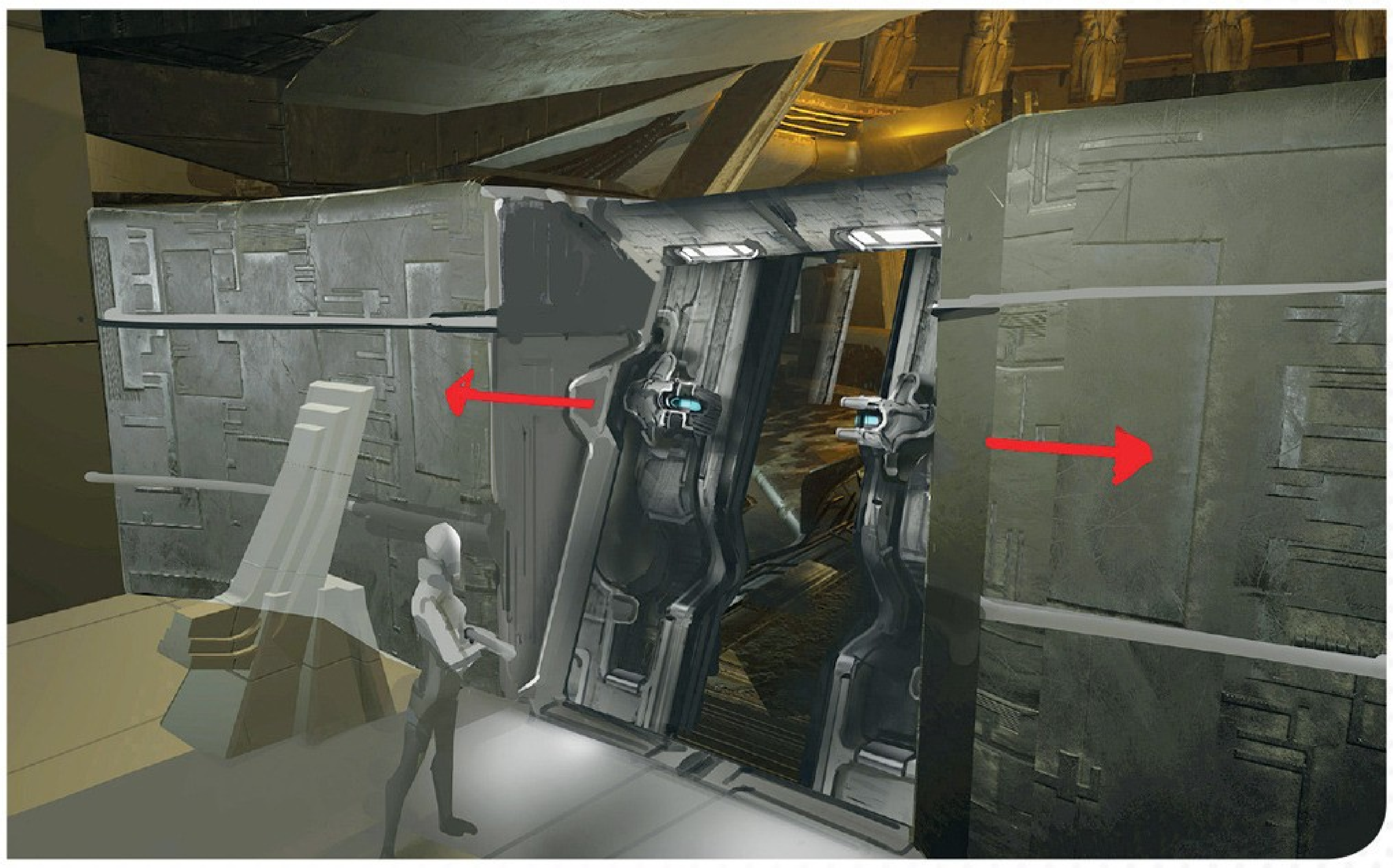
JM: These are designs for kett outposts and facilities. We were playing with iconic kett shapes and how they'd all work together.

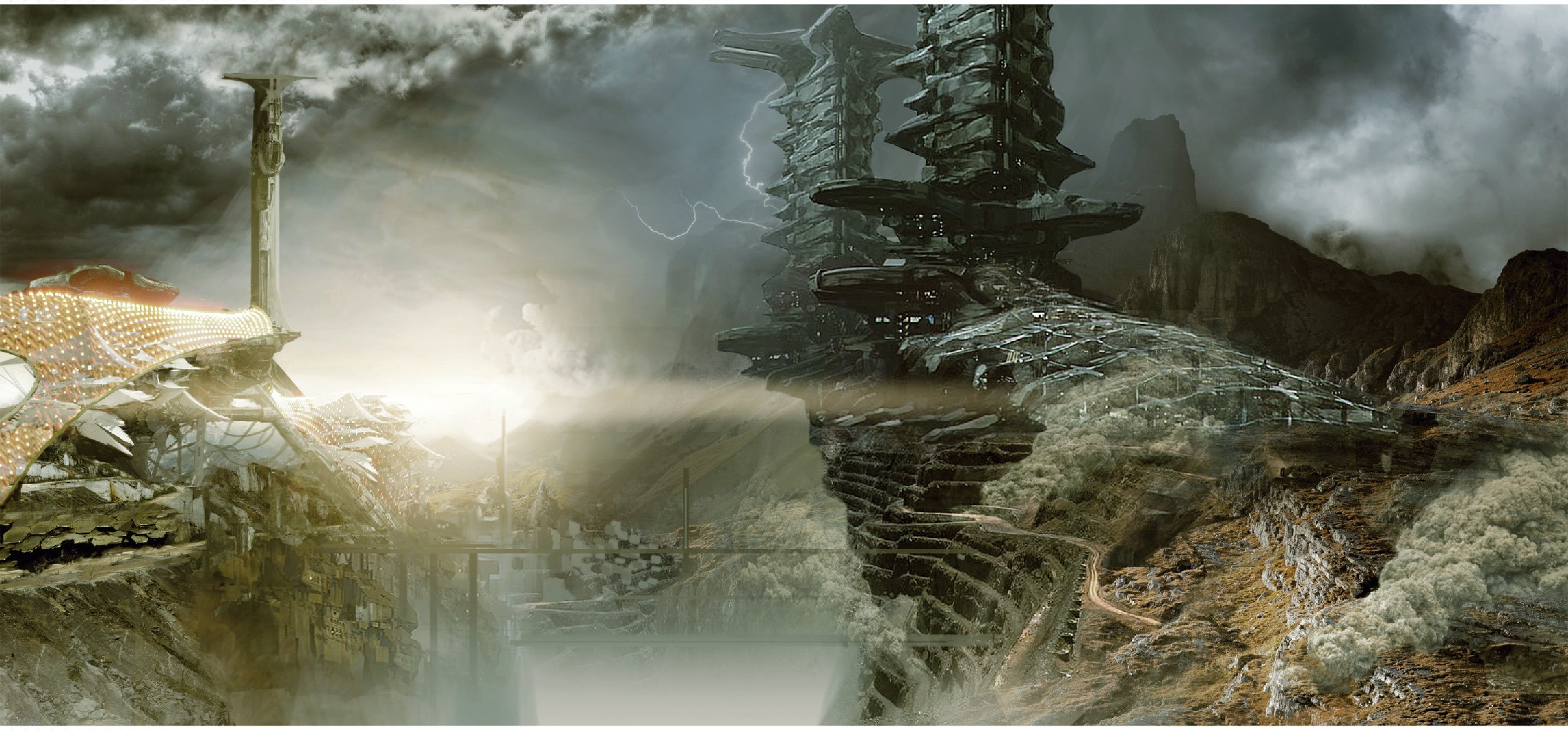


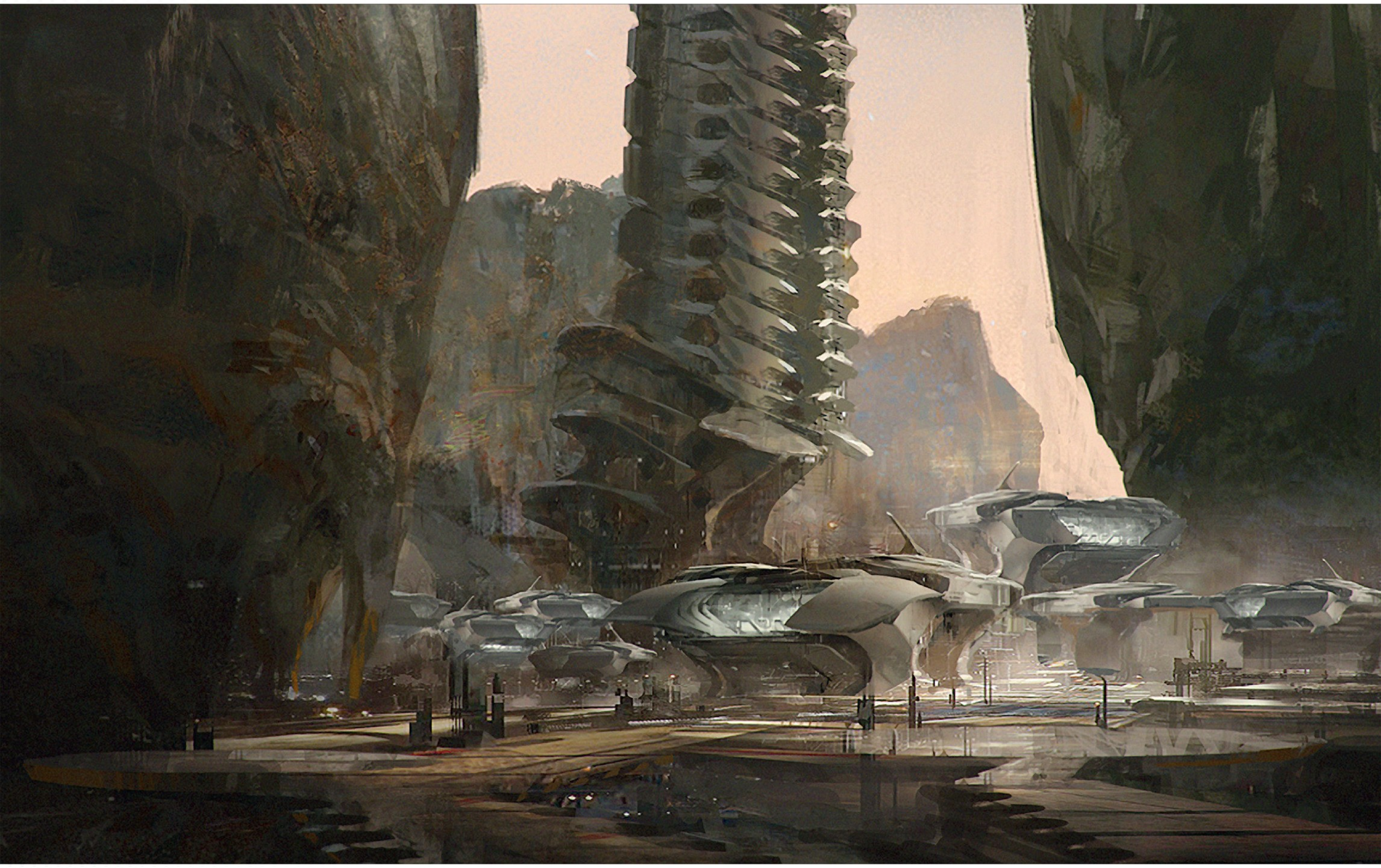




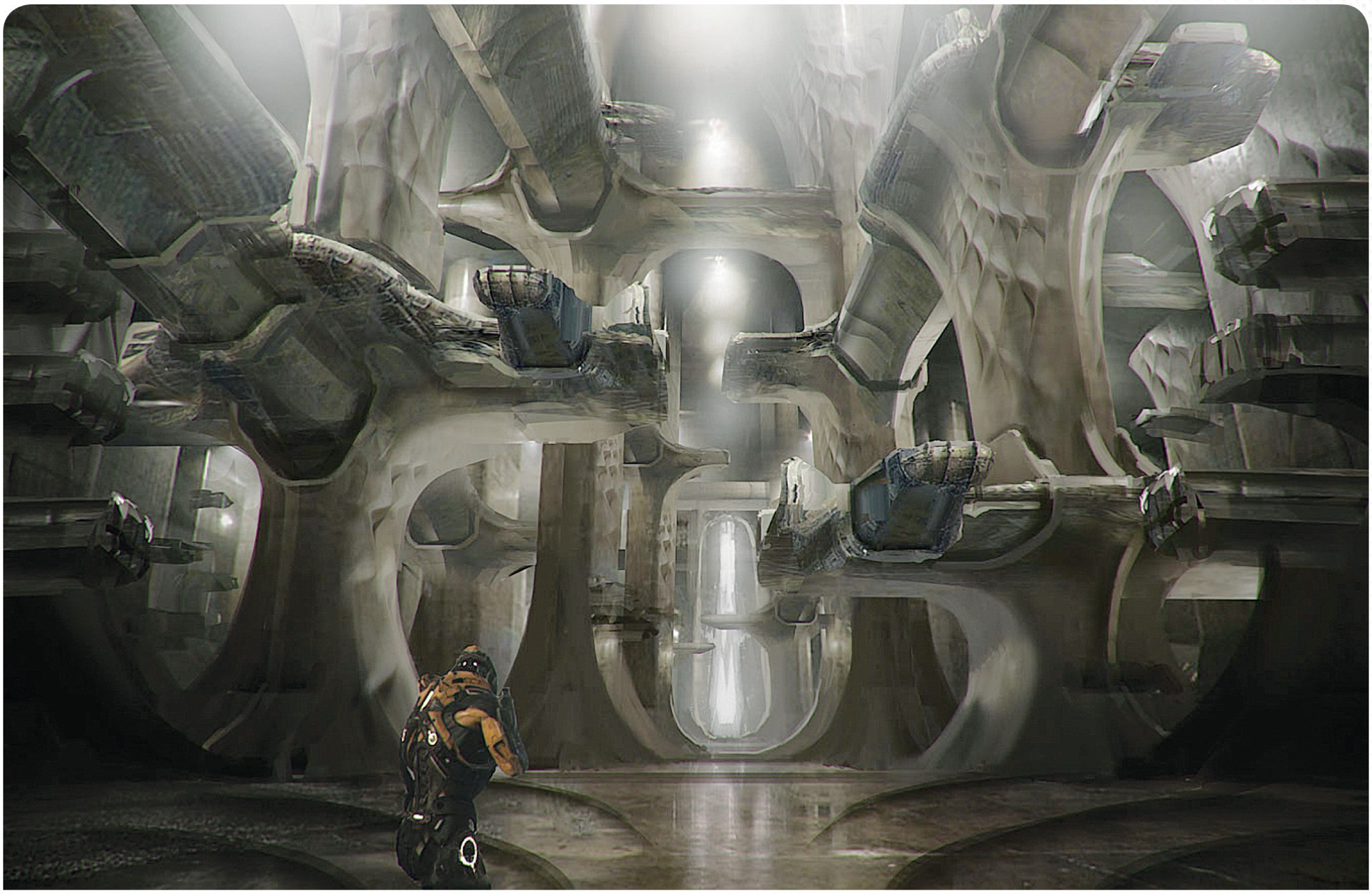


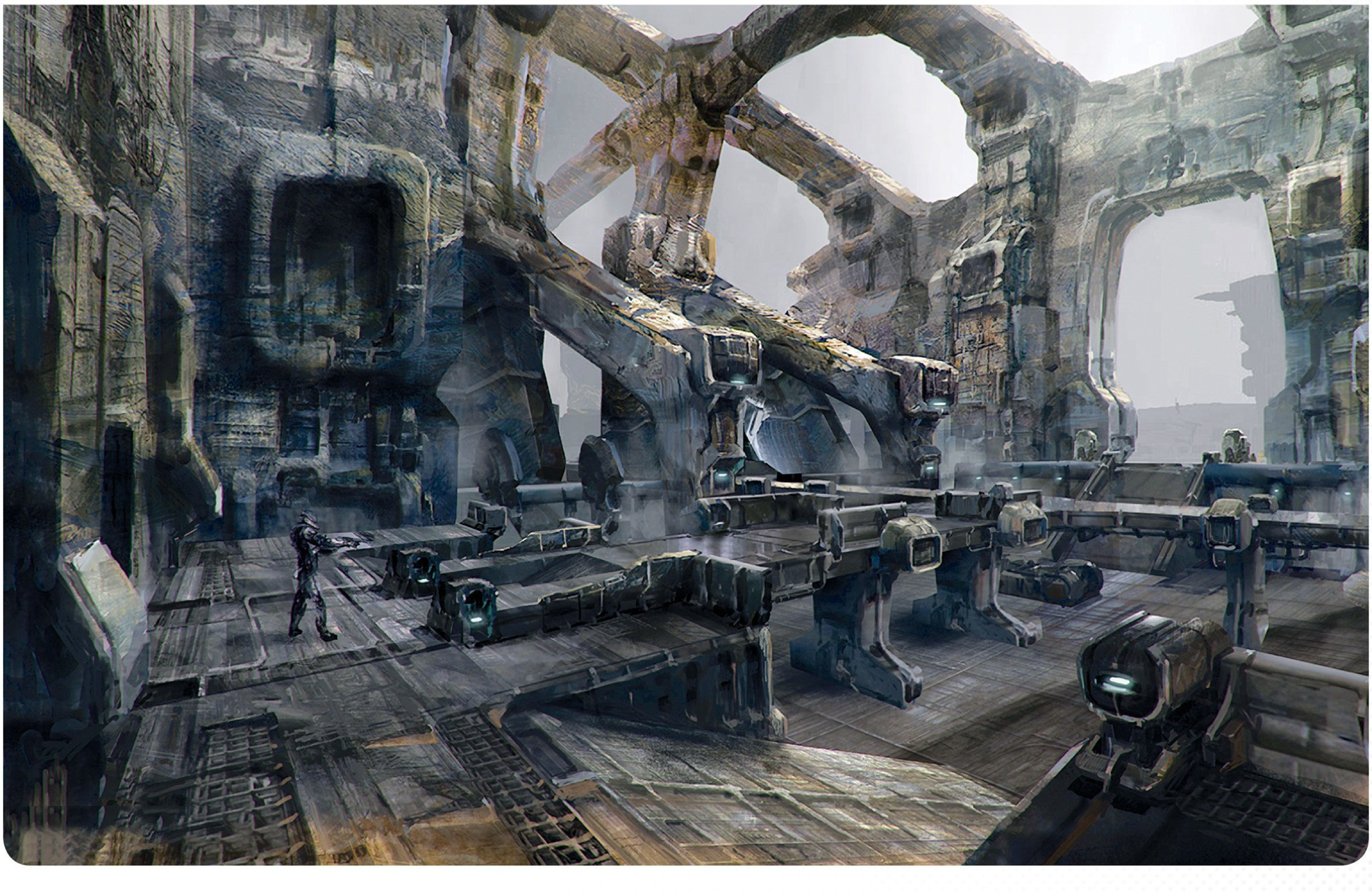


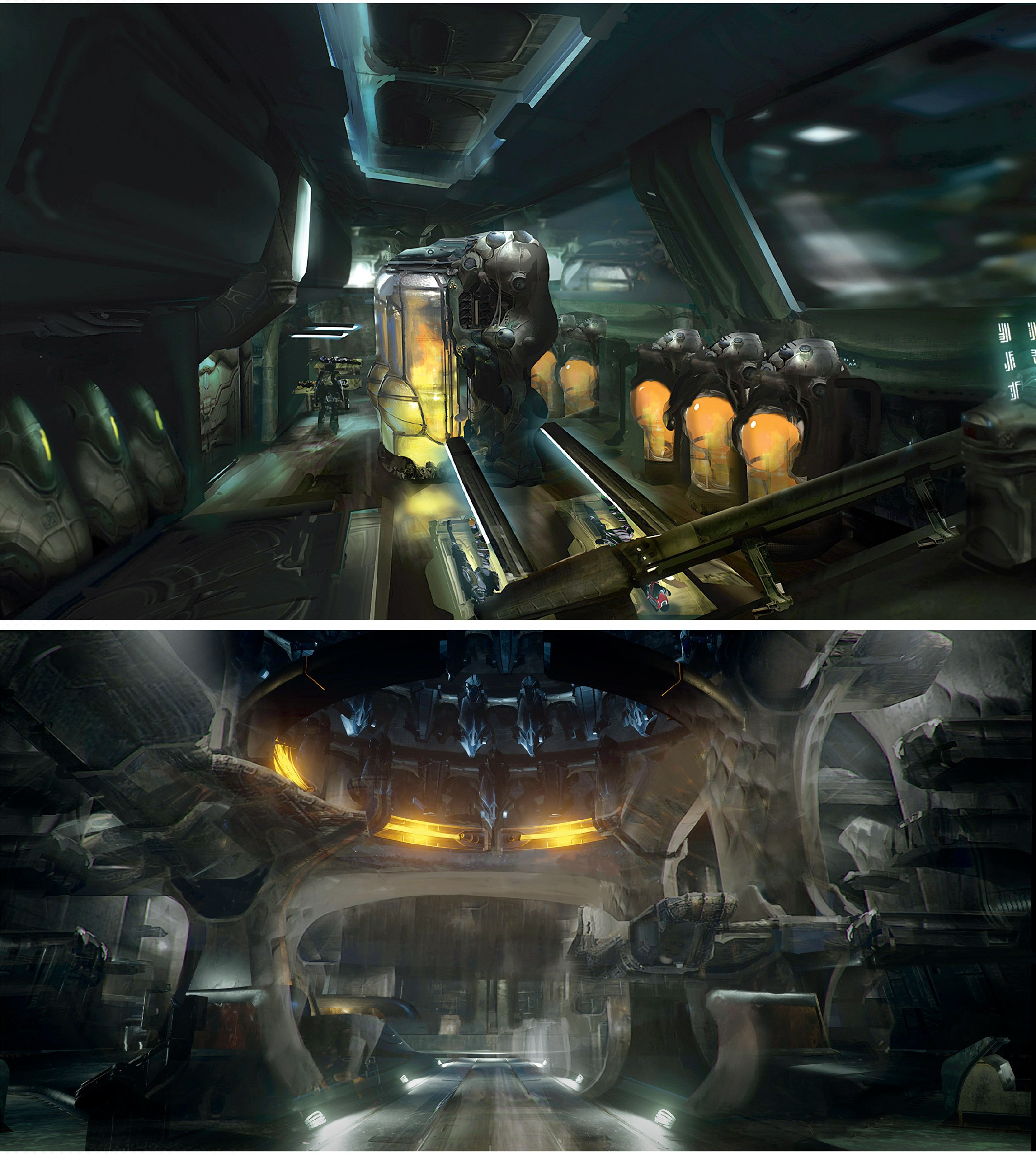




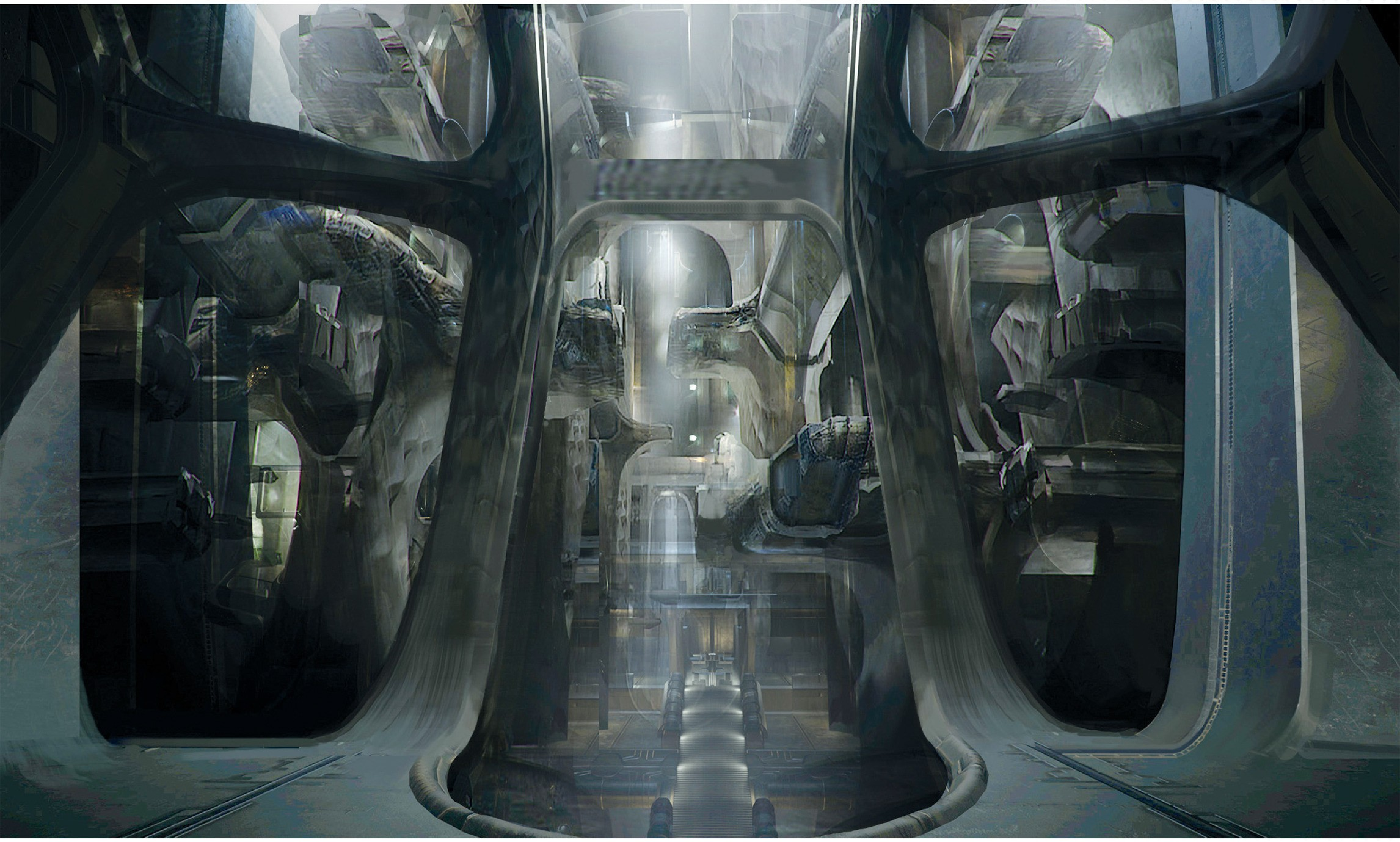
JM: These are designs for the kett facility. This place needed to act as a cathedral and facility for producing kett exalted. It was tough to strike a look that would balance both ornate and industrial aesthetics within the kett palette.

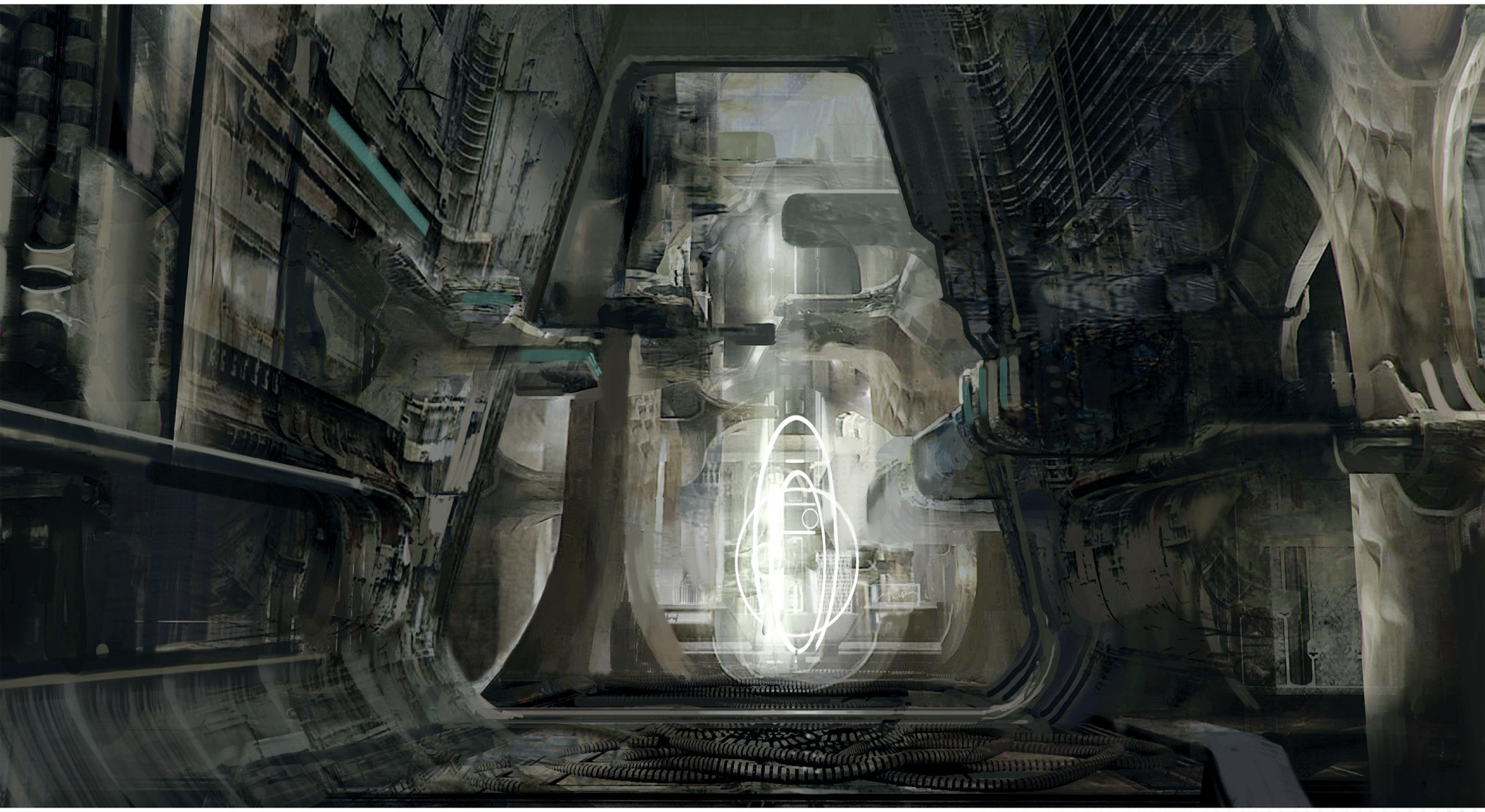


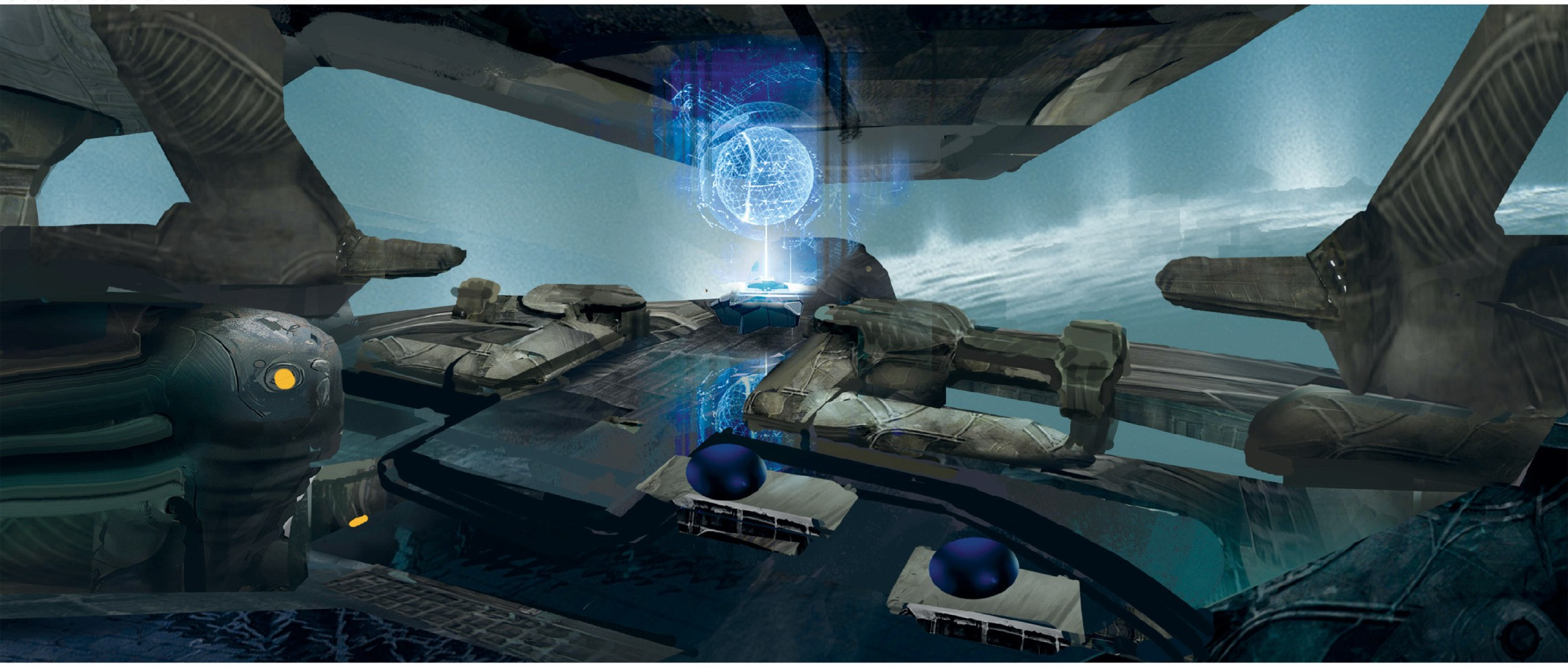


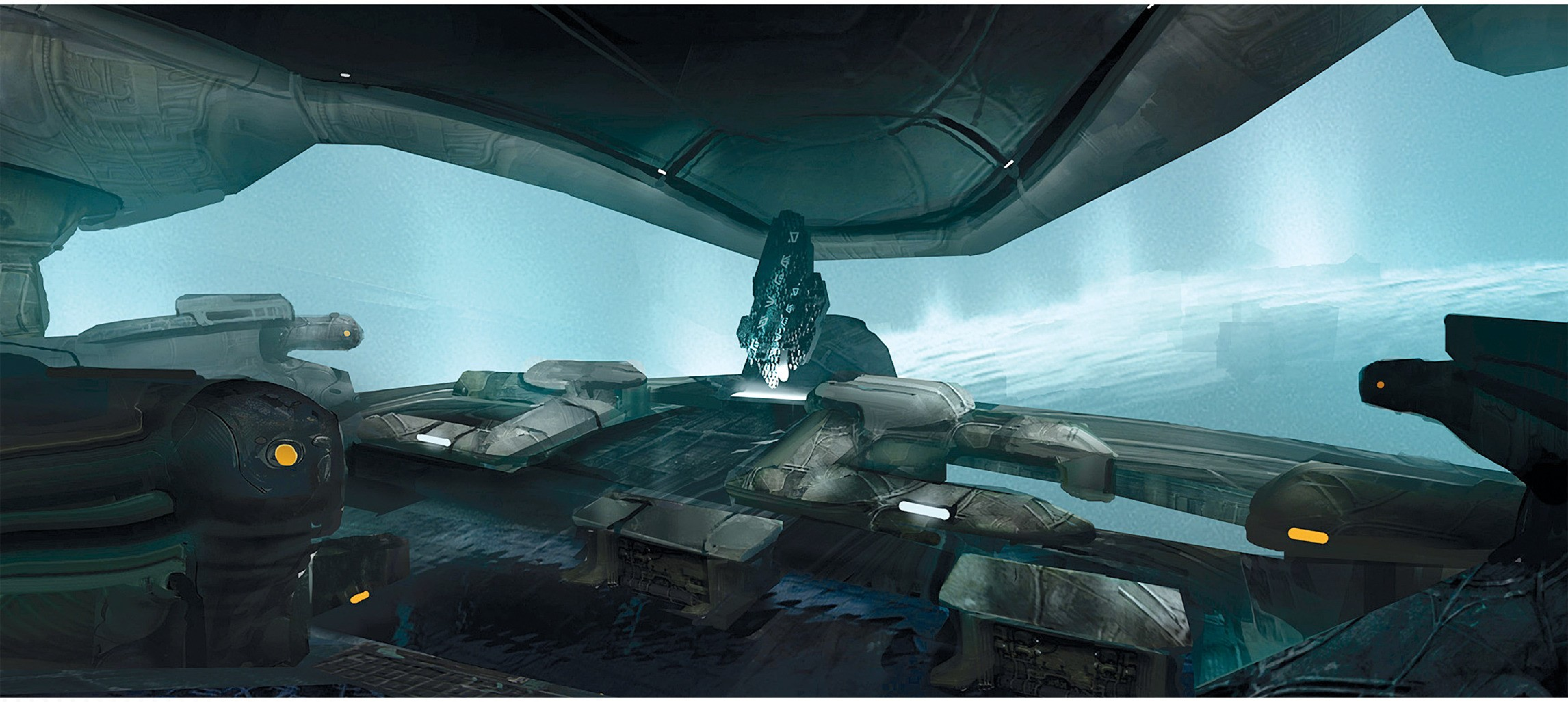


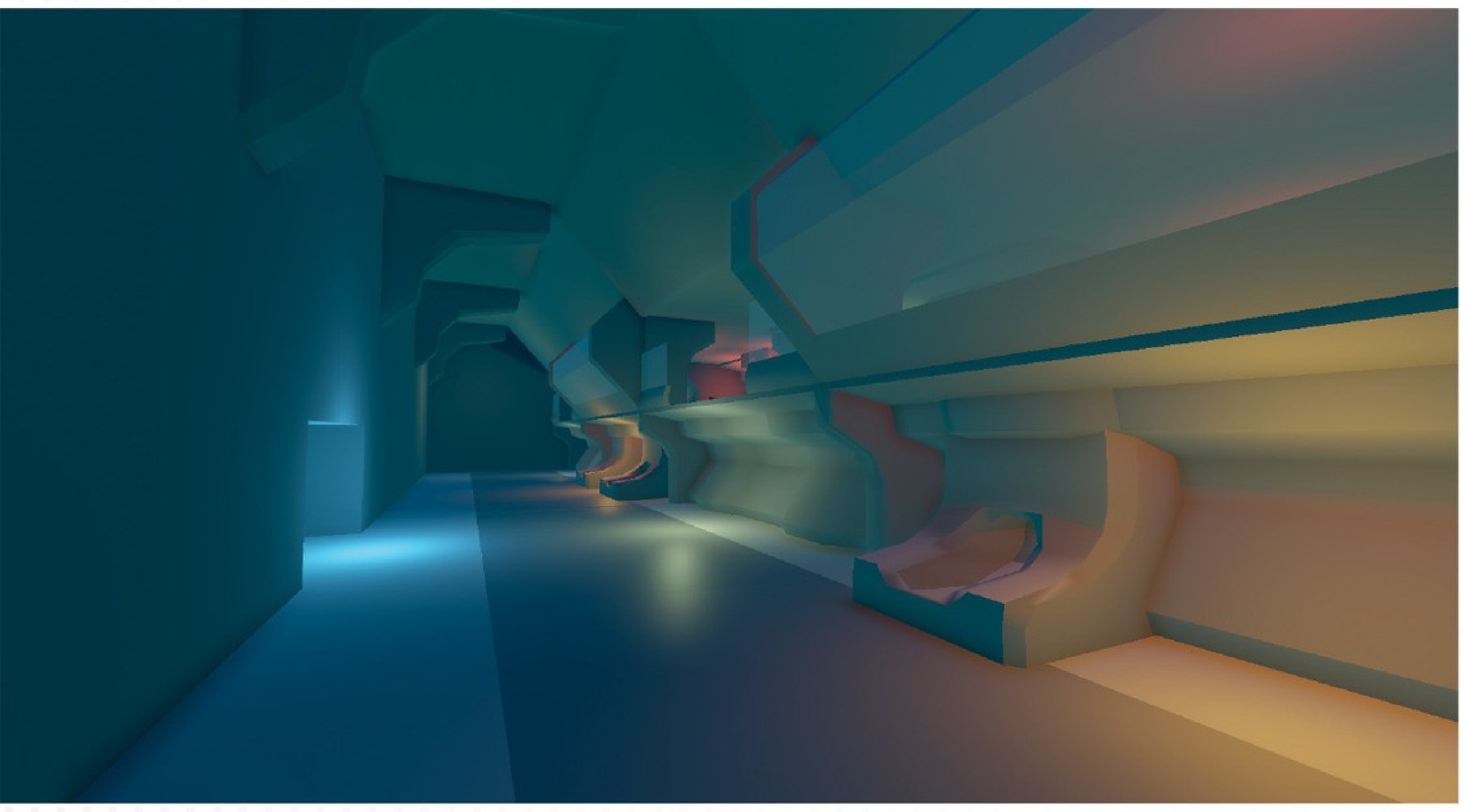
JM: These are different identity iterations for the kett chambers.

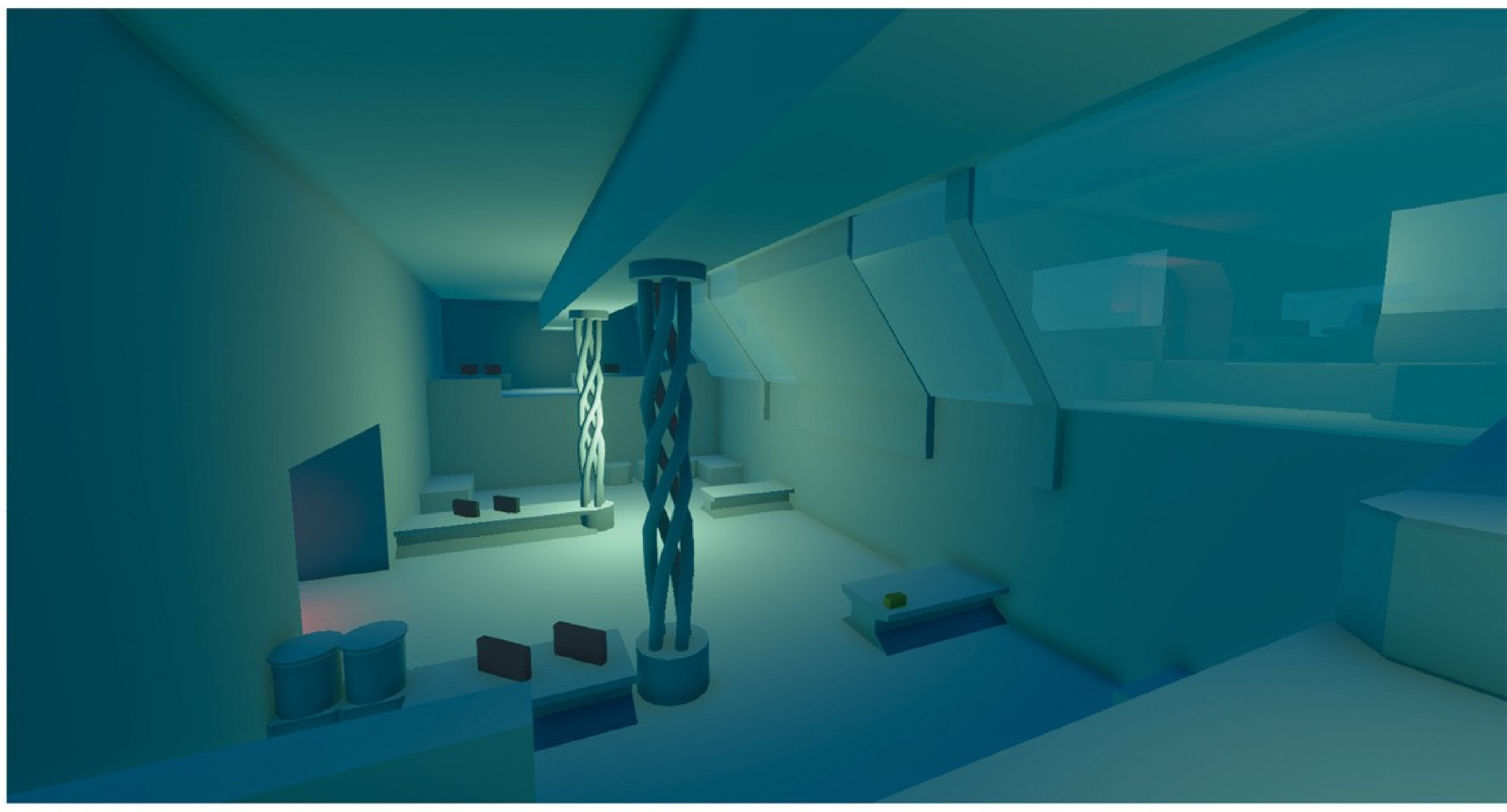


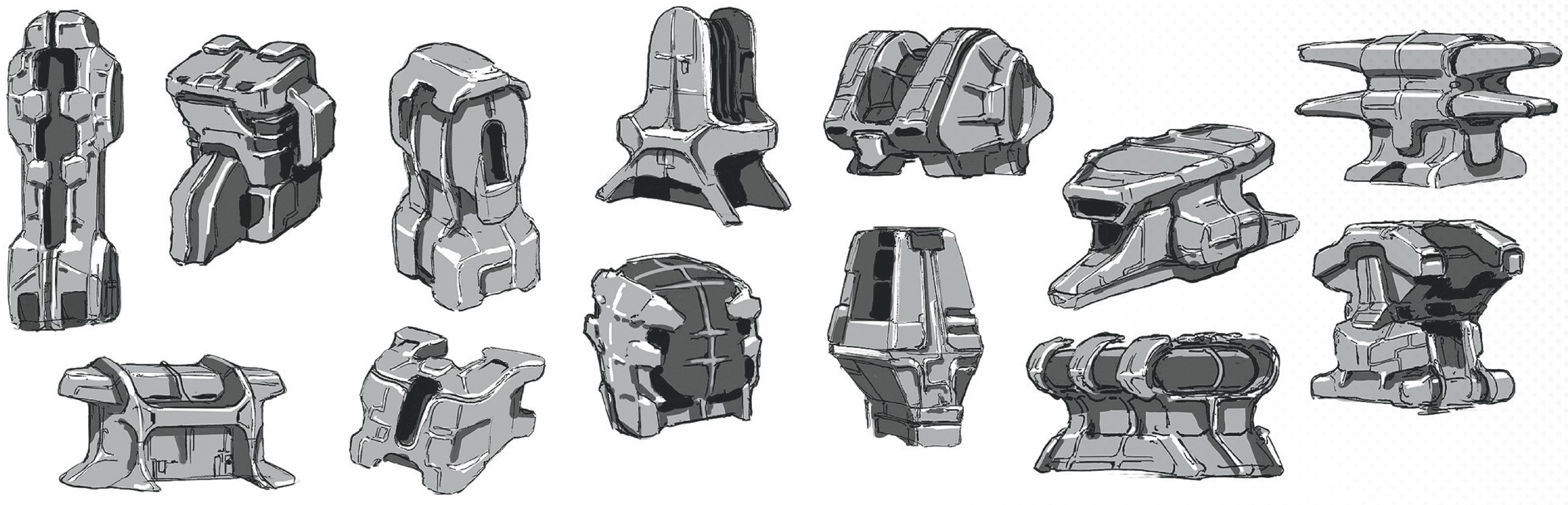


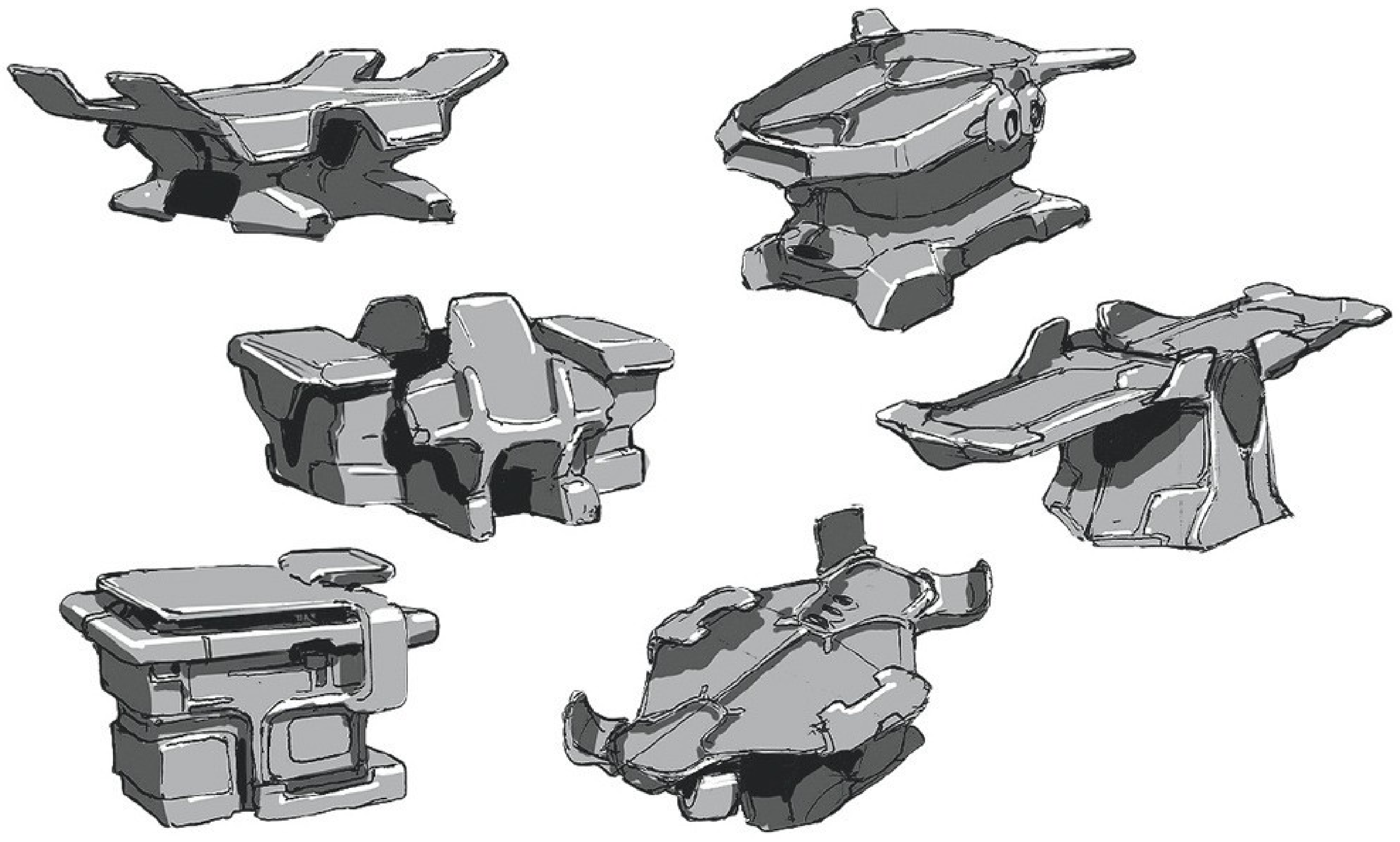


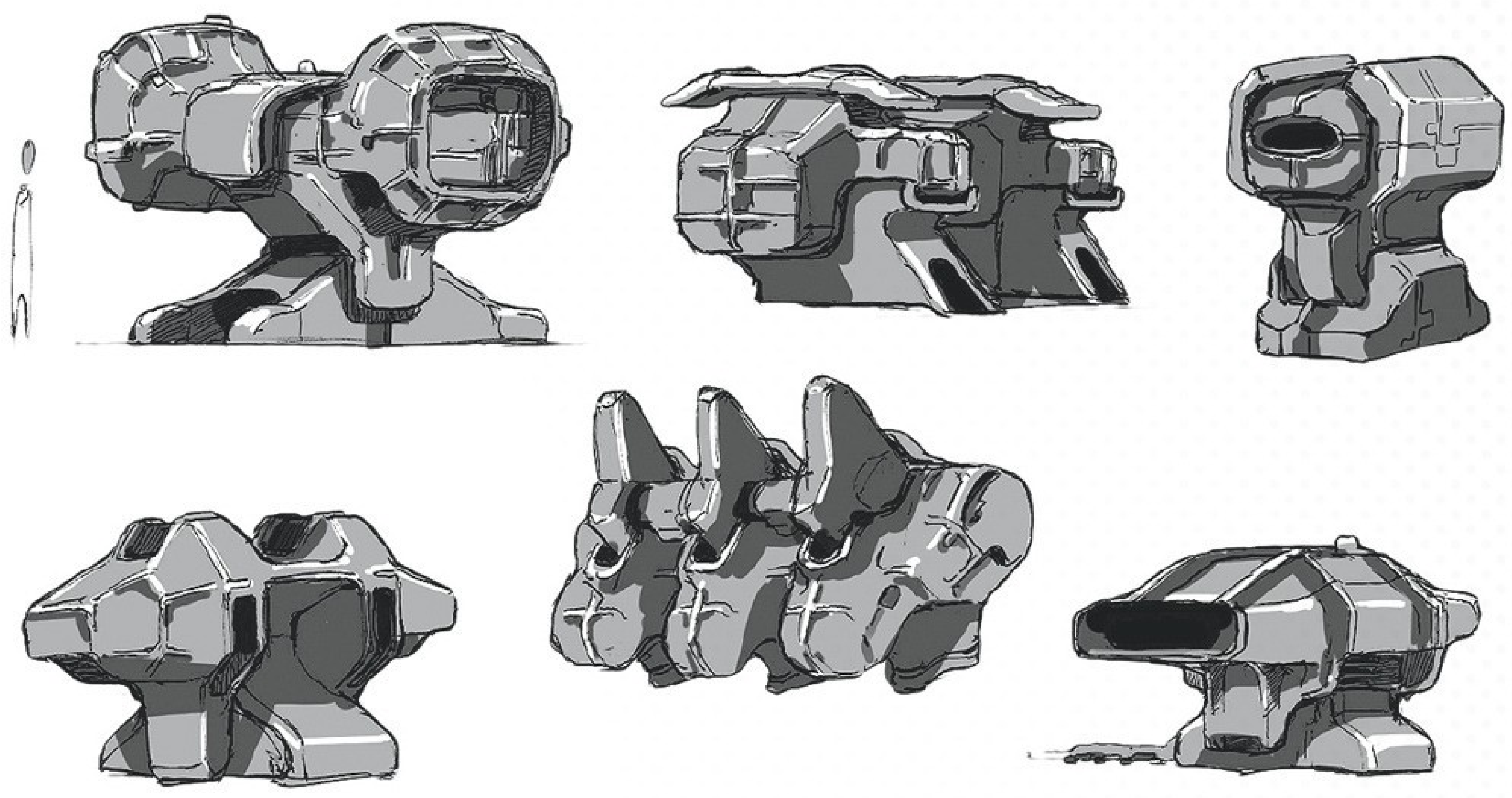


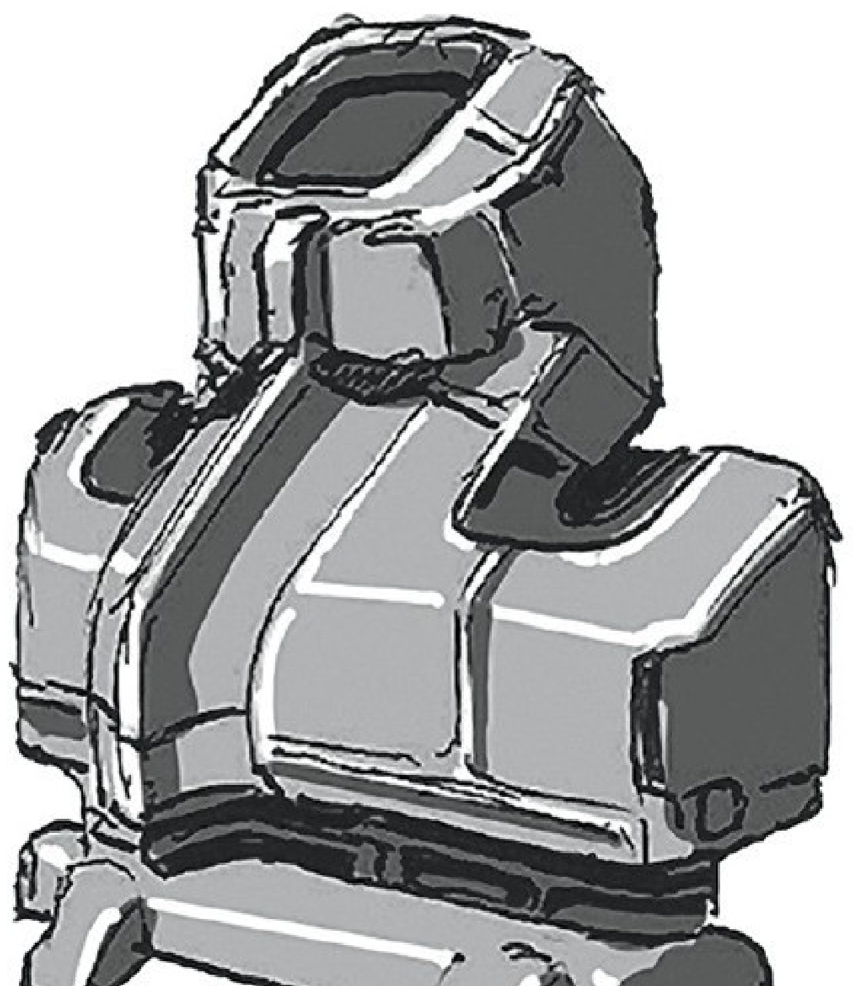


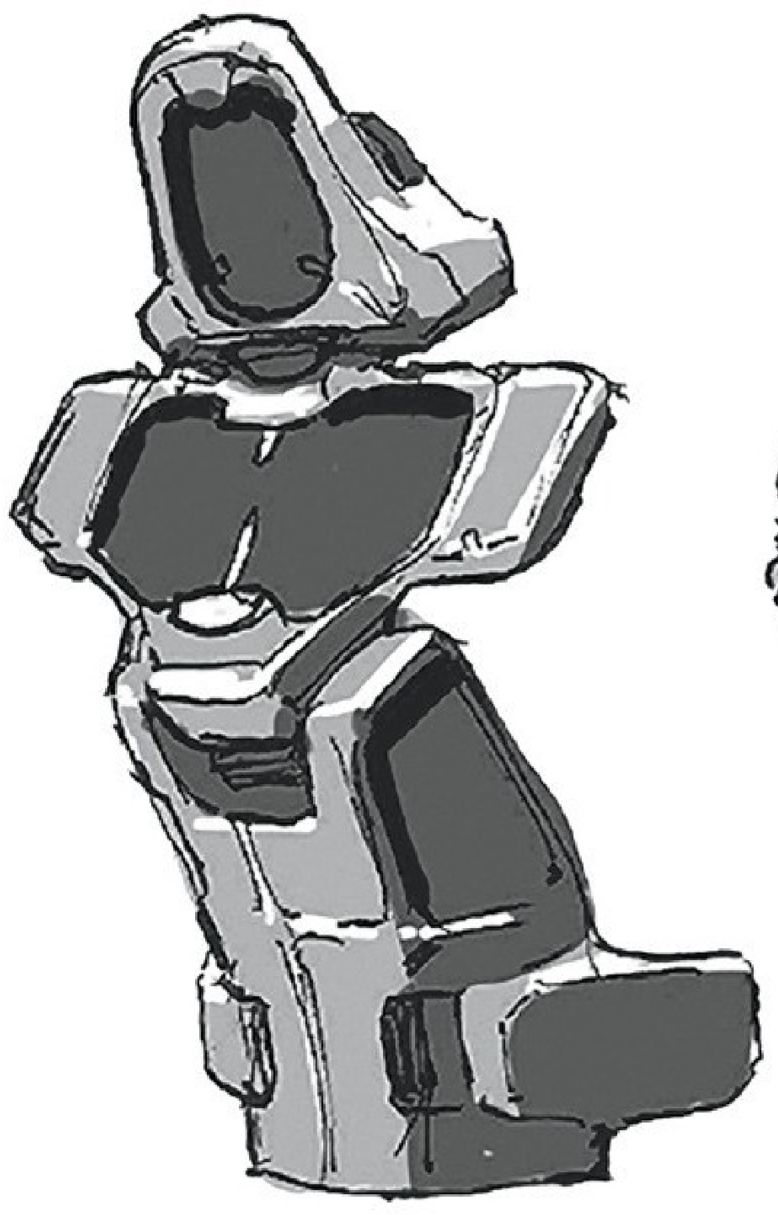


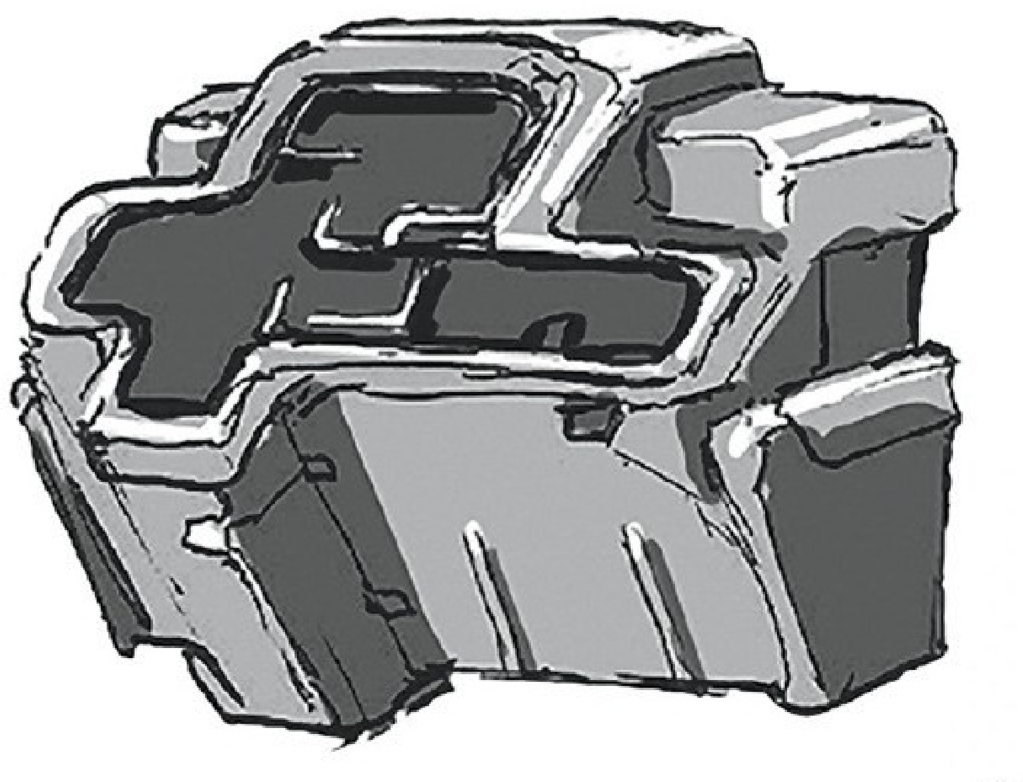


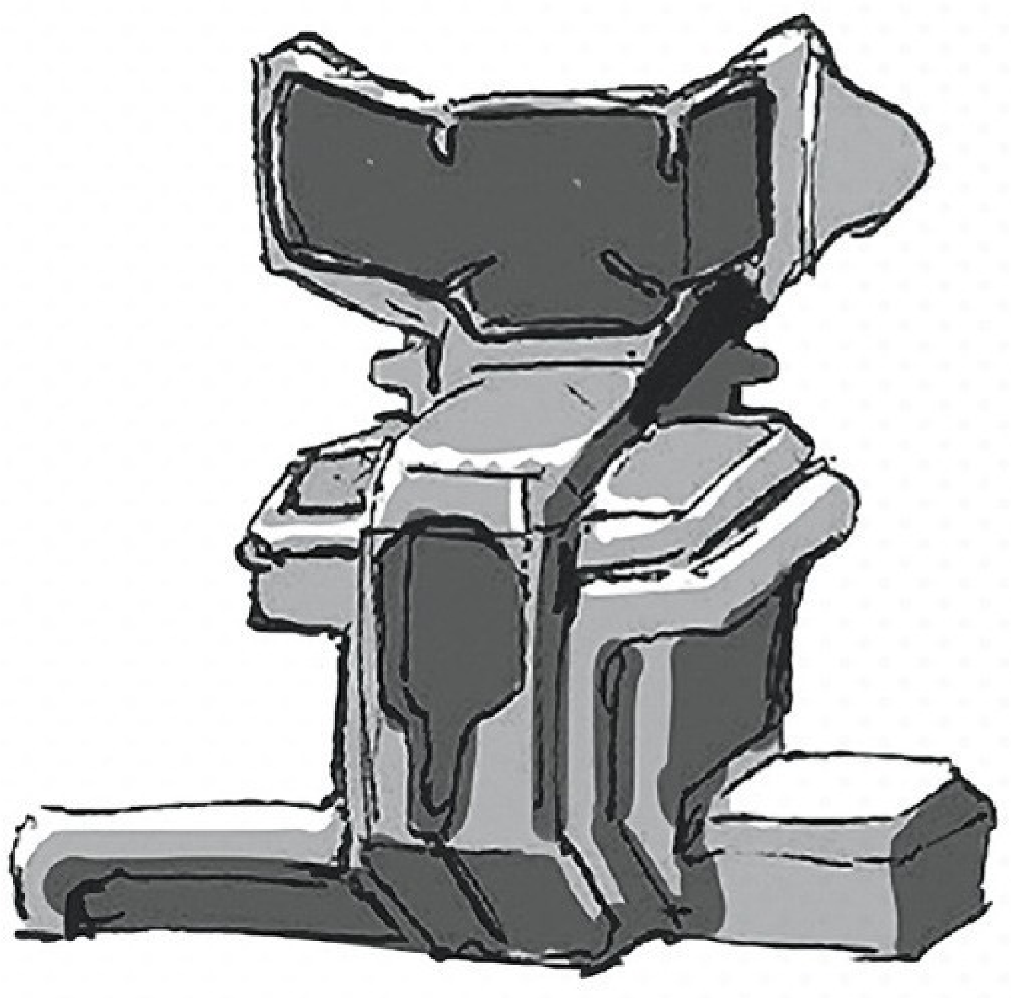


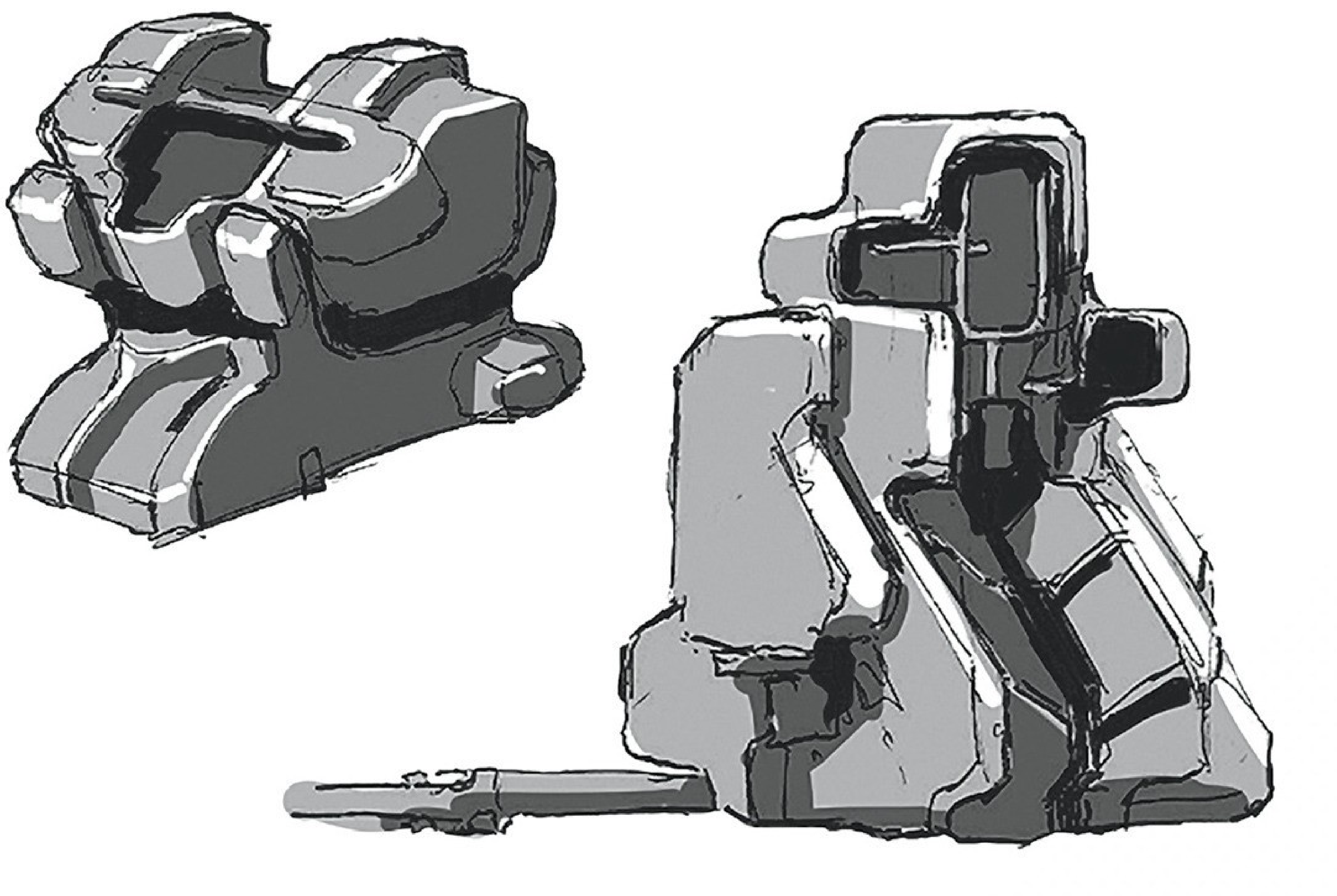


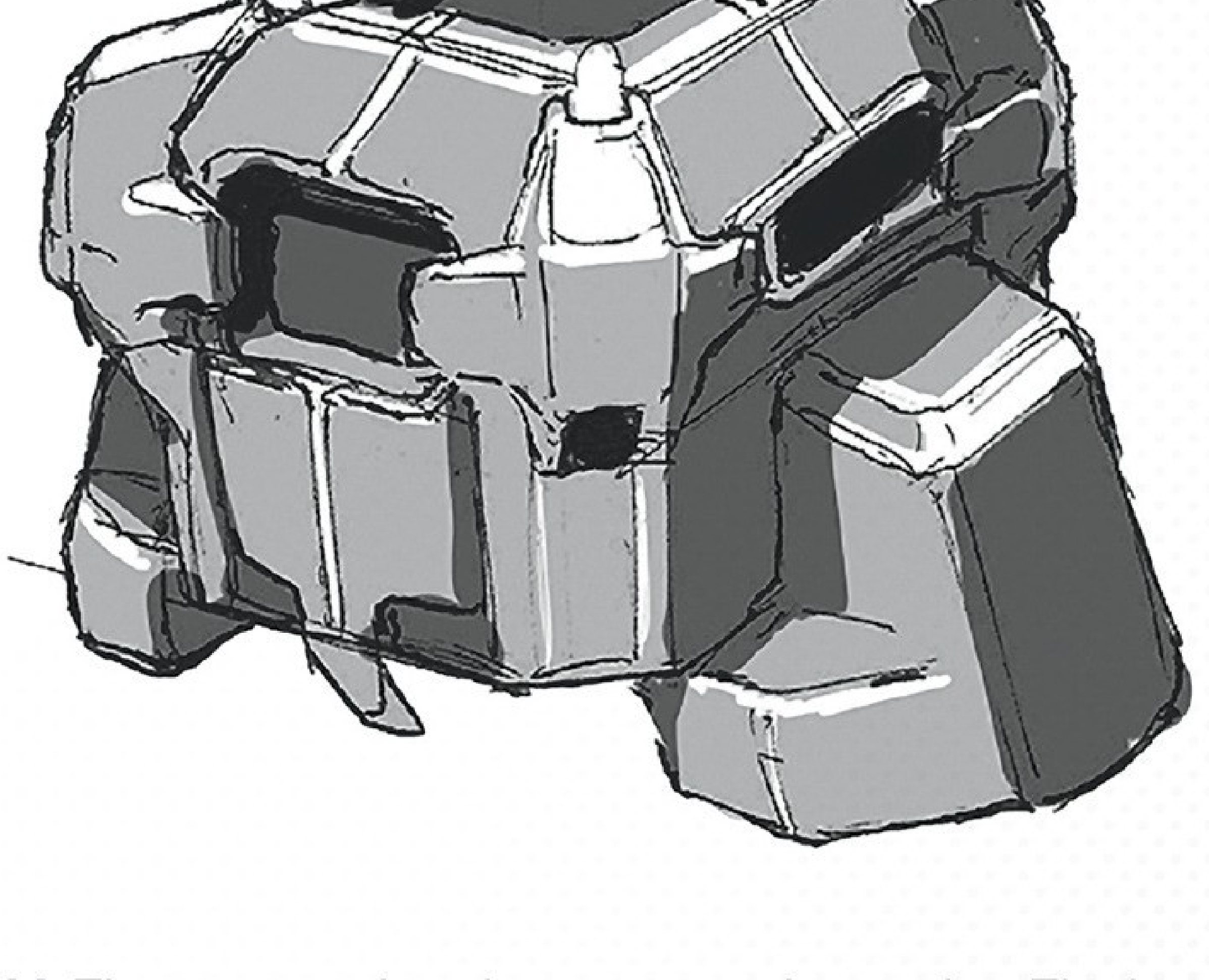




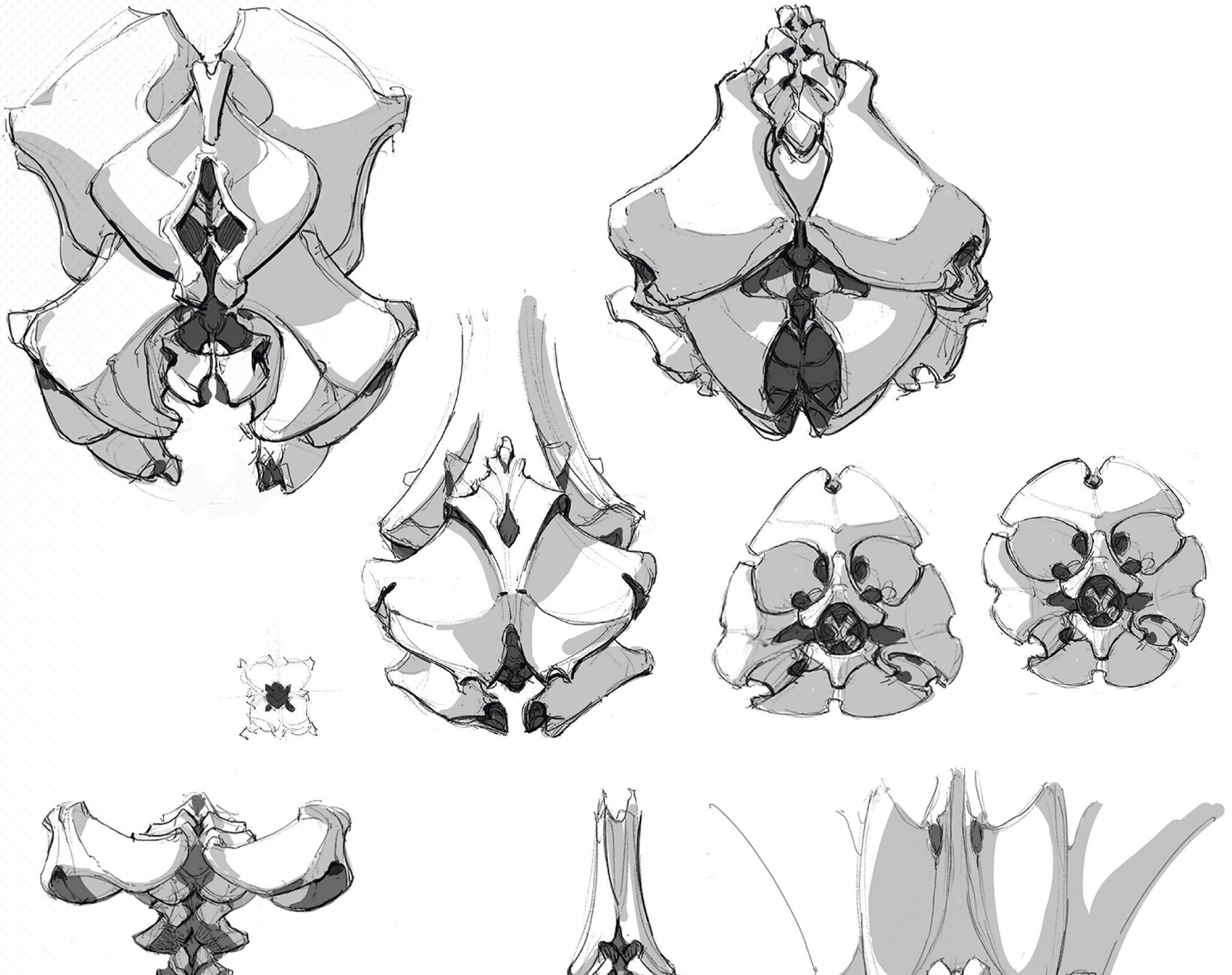




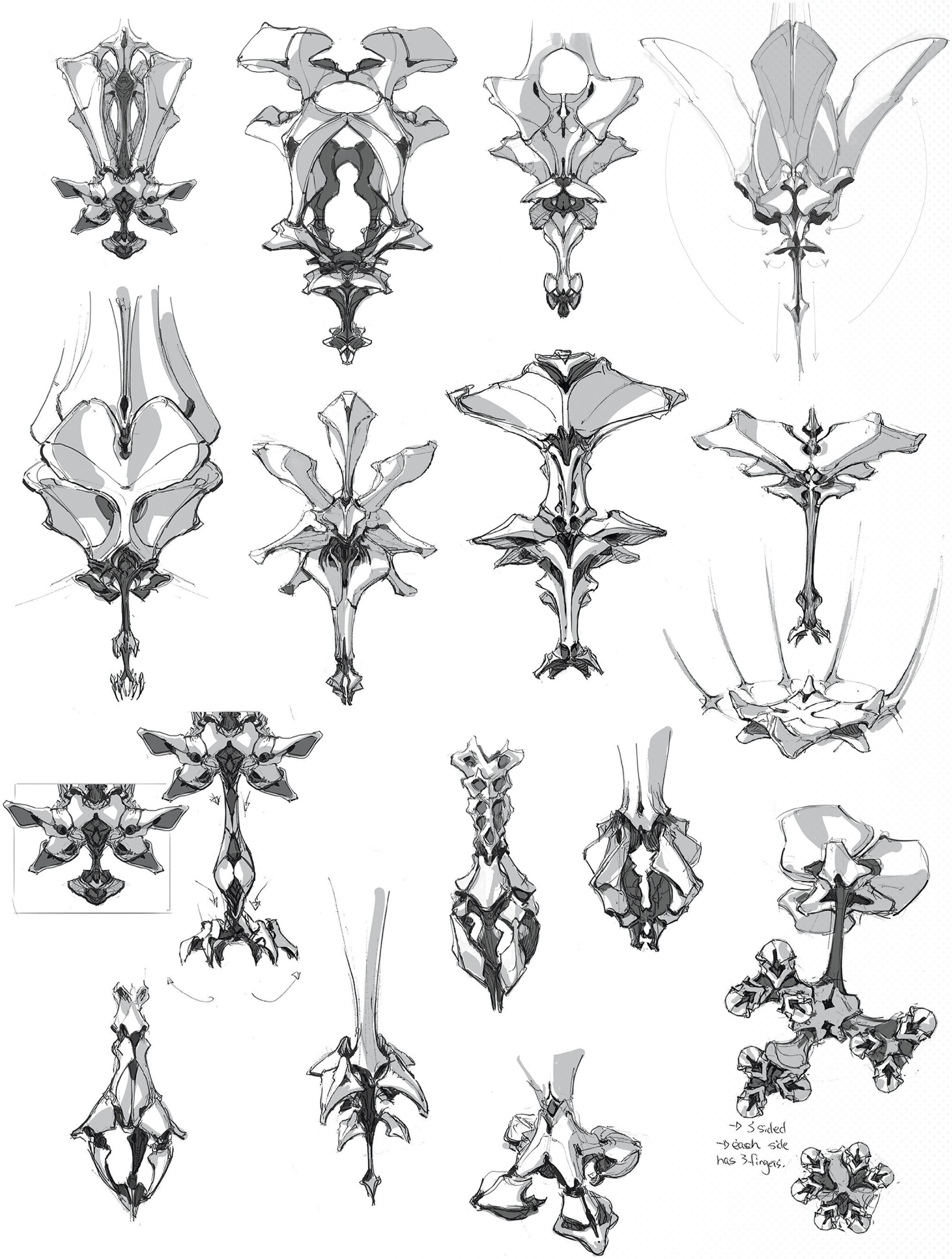


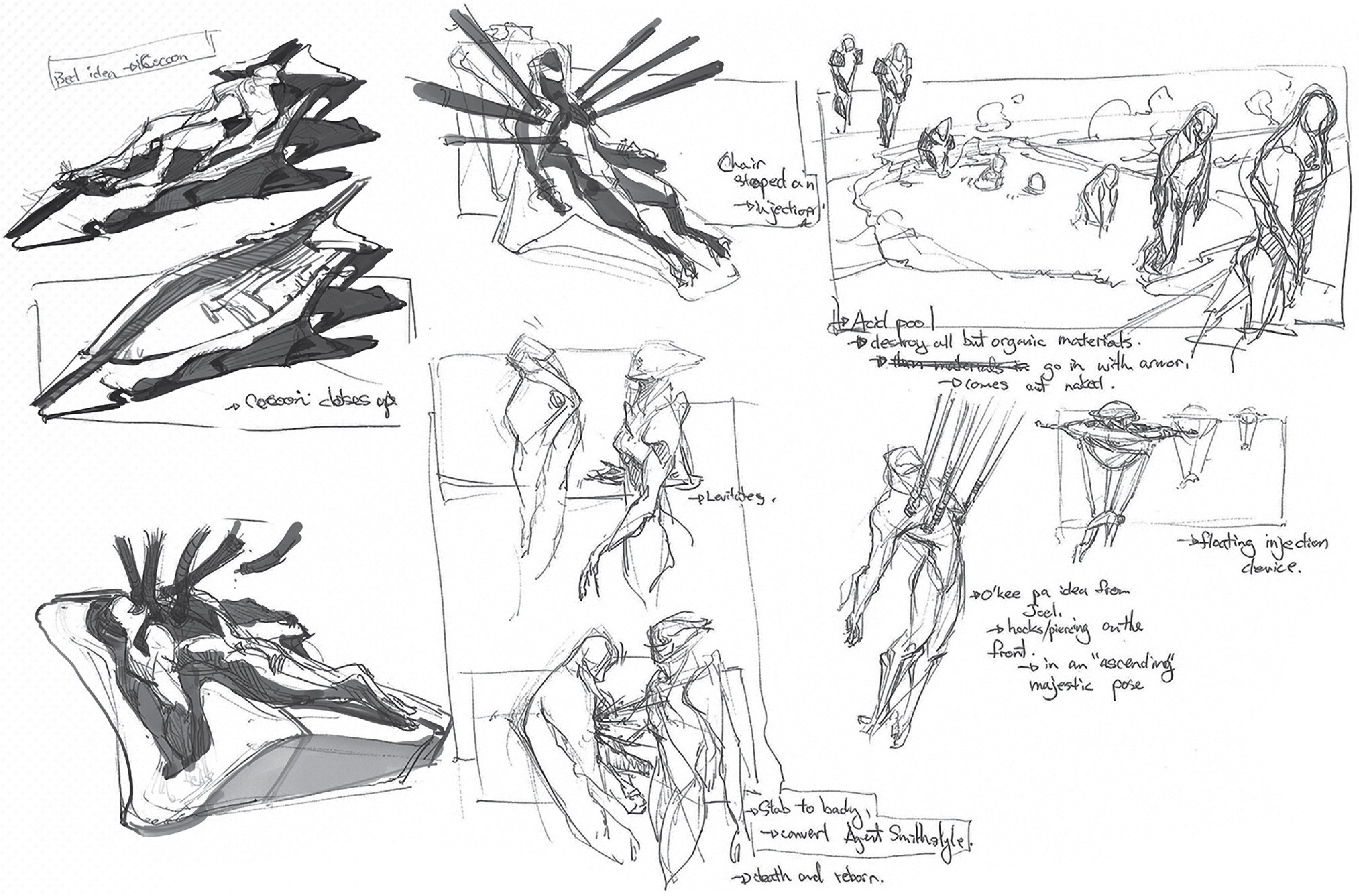


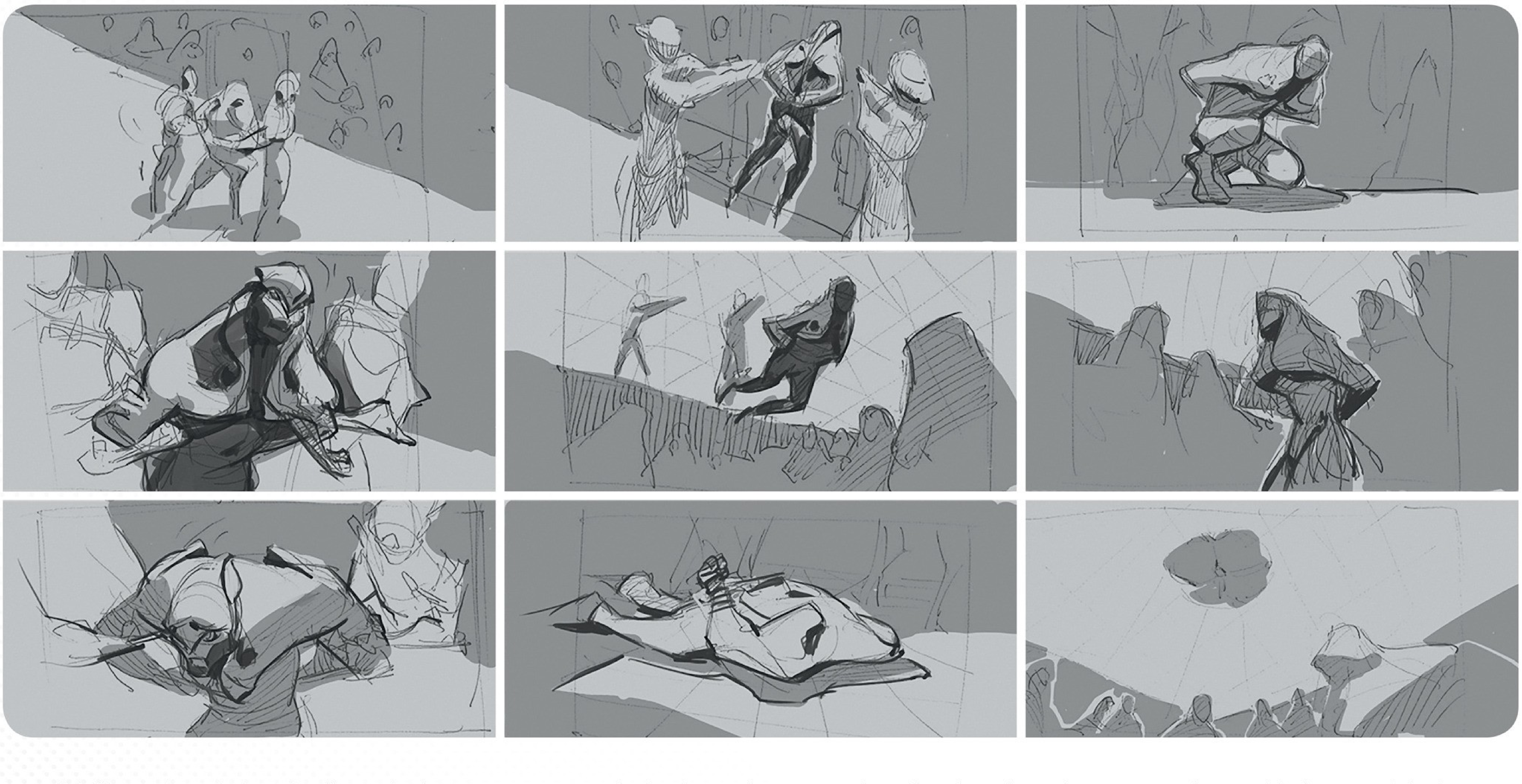
JM: These are various kett props and consoles. The kett design and architecture are an interesting blend of industrial and organic. These props, while looking mechanical, still have an organic quality to them. It's a quality that really makes the kett feel unique as a species.



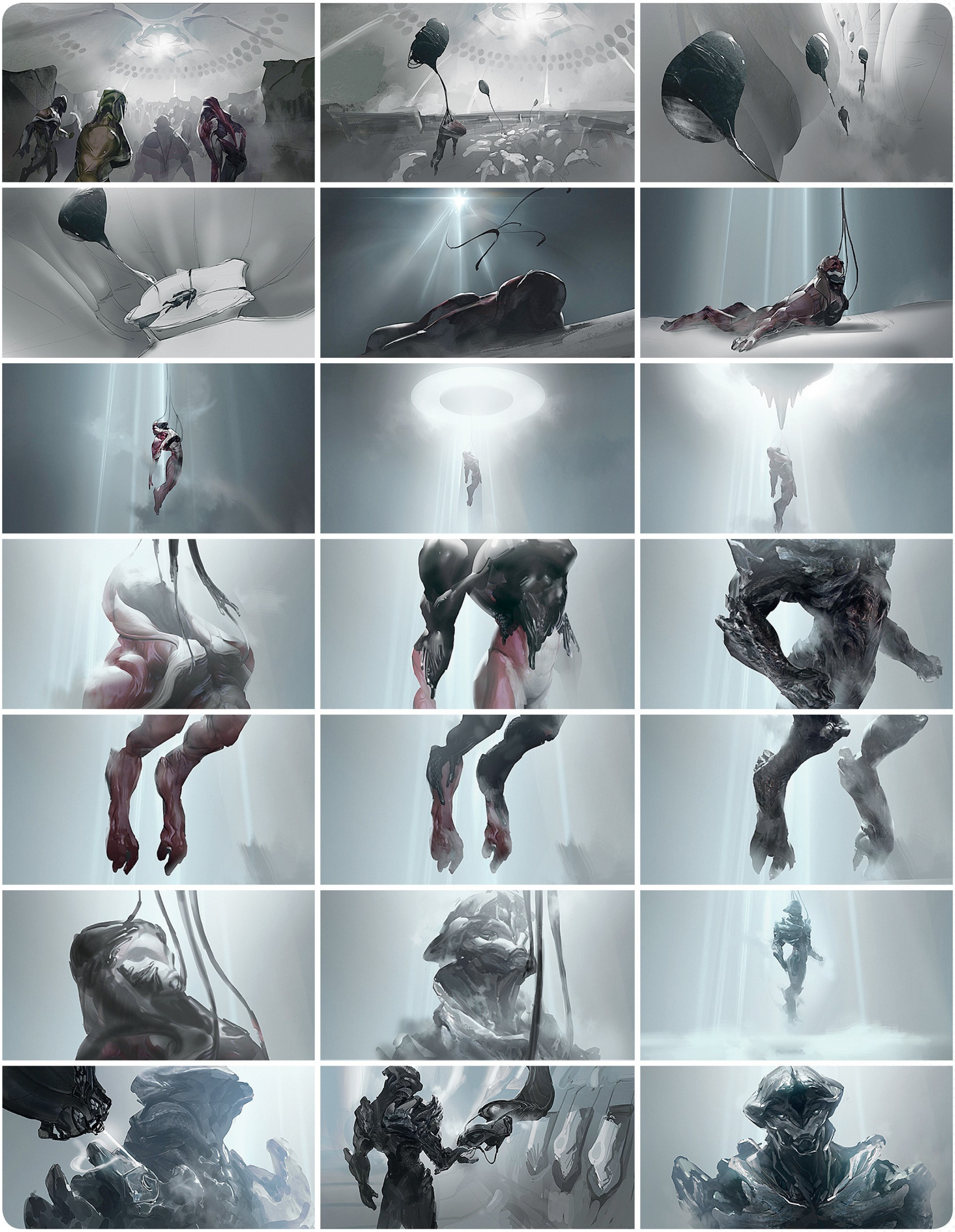
JM: These sketches describe the metamorphic kett process of exaltation, as it originally existed.

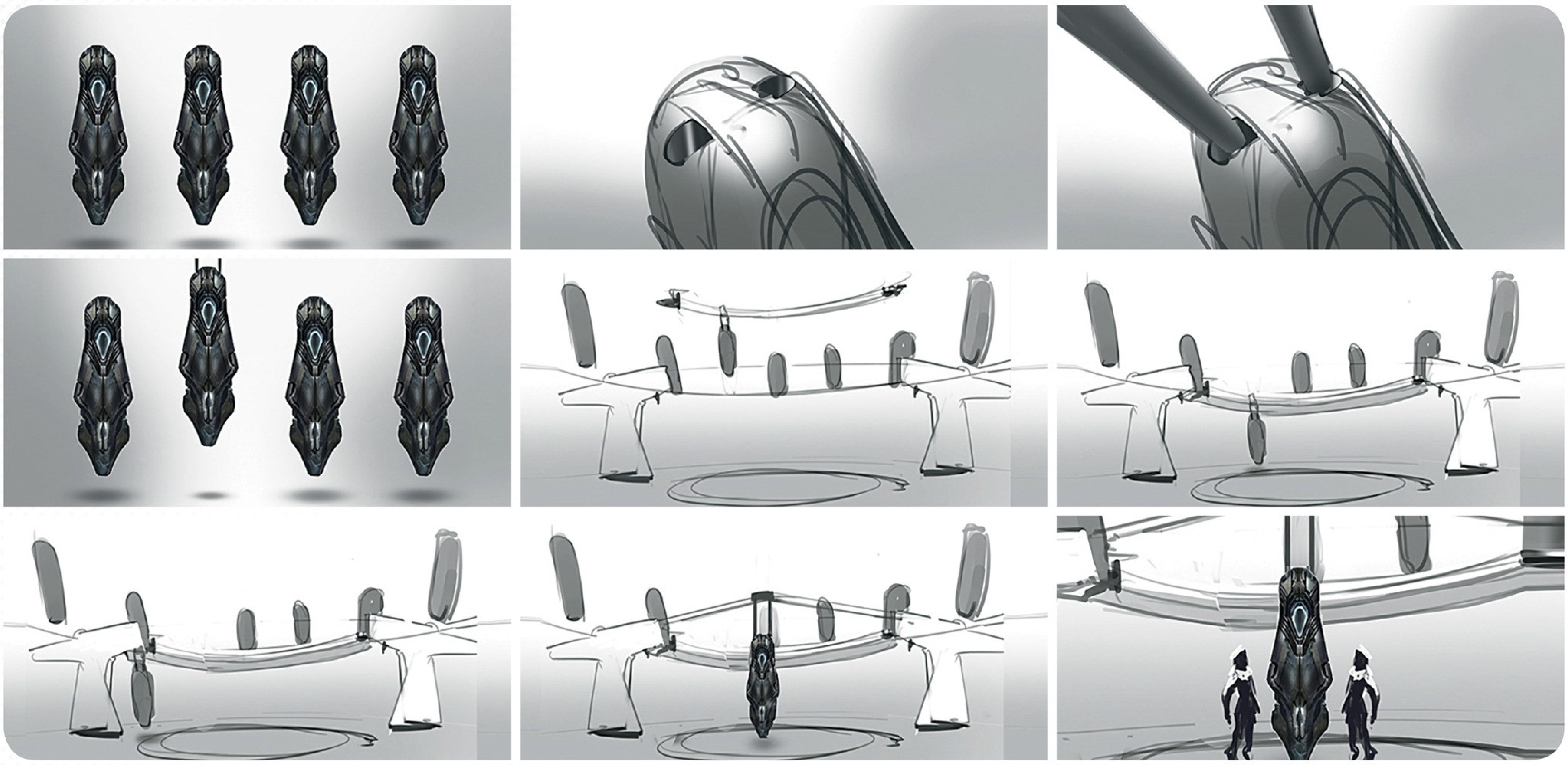

-> 3 sided
-> each side has 3-fingers.


Bed idea → cocoon
→ cocoon closes up
Chair shaped an → injection
→ Acid pool
→ destroy all but organic materials.
→ ~~then materials in~~ go in with armor,
→ comes out naked.
→ Levitates.
→ floating injection device.
→ O'kee pa idea from Joel.
→ hooks/piercing on the front.
→ in an "ascending" majestic pose
→ Stab to body,
→ convert Agent Smithstyle.
→ death and reborn.

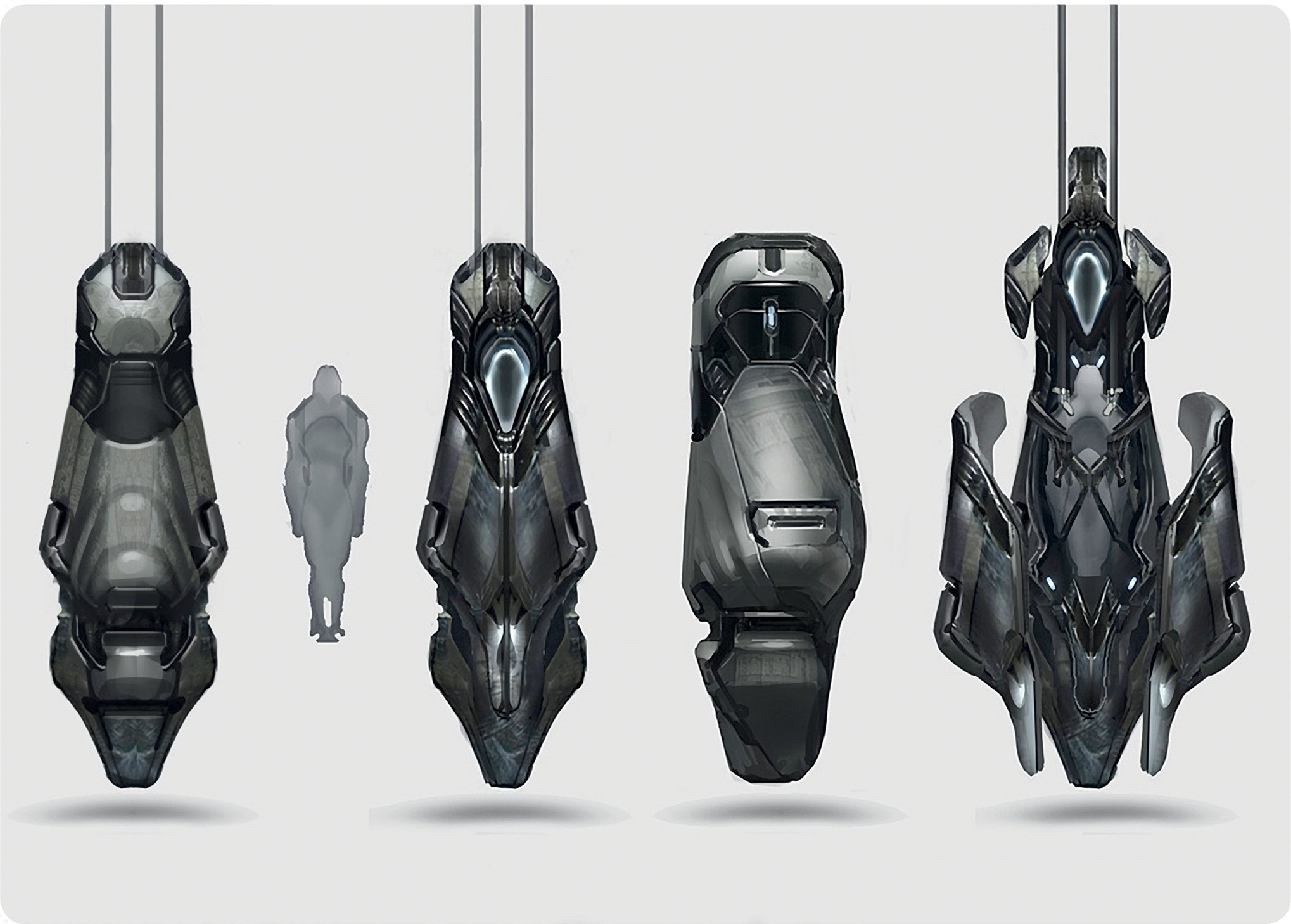


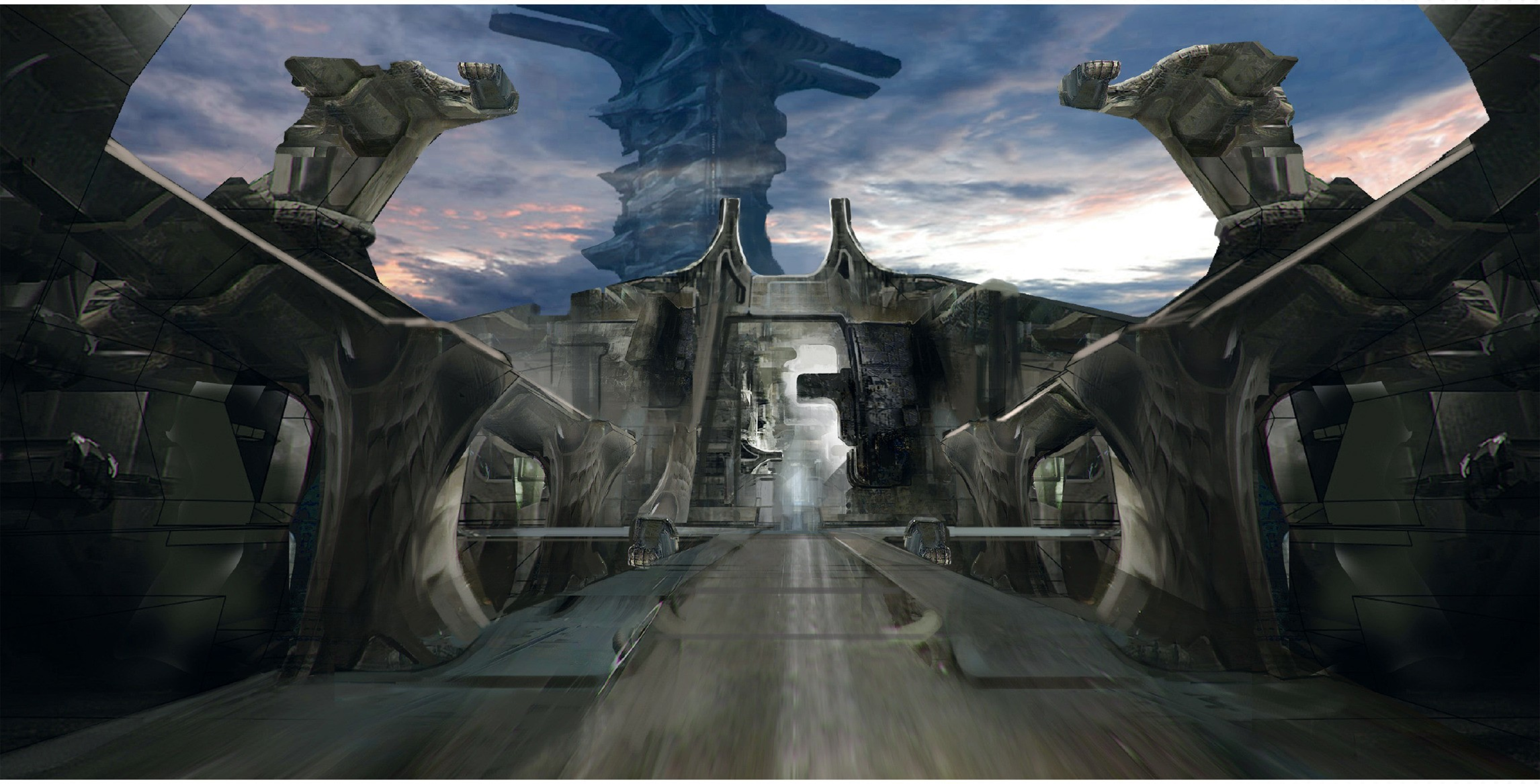
JM: The various designs for the exaltation process were quite foreign and very organic at first. In order to be more consistent with the rest of the kett palette, we slowly made it feel more industrial and similar to an assembly line.

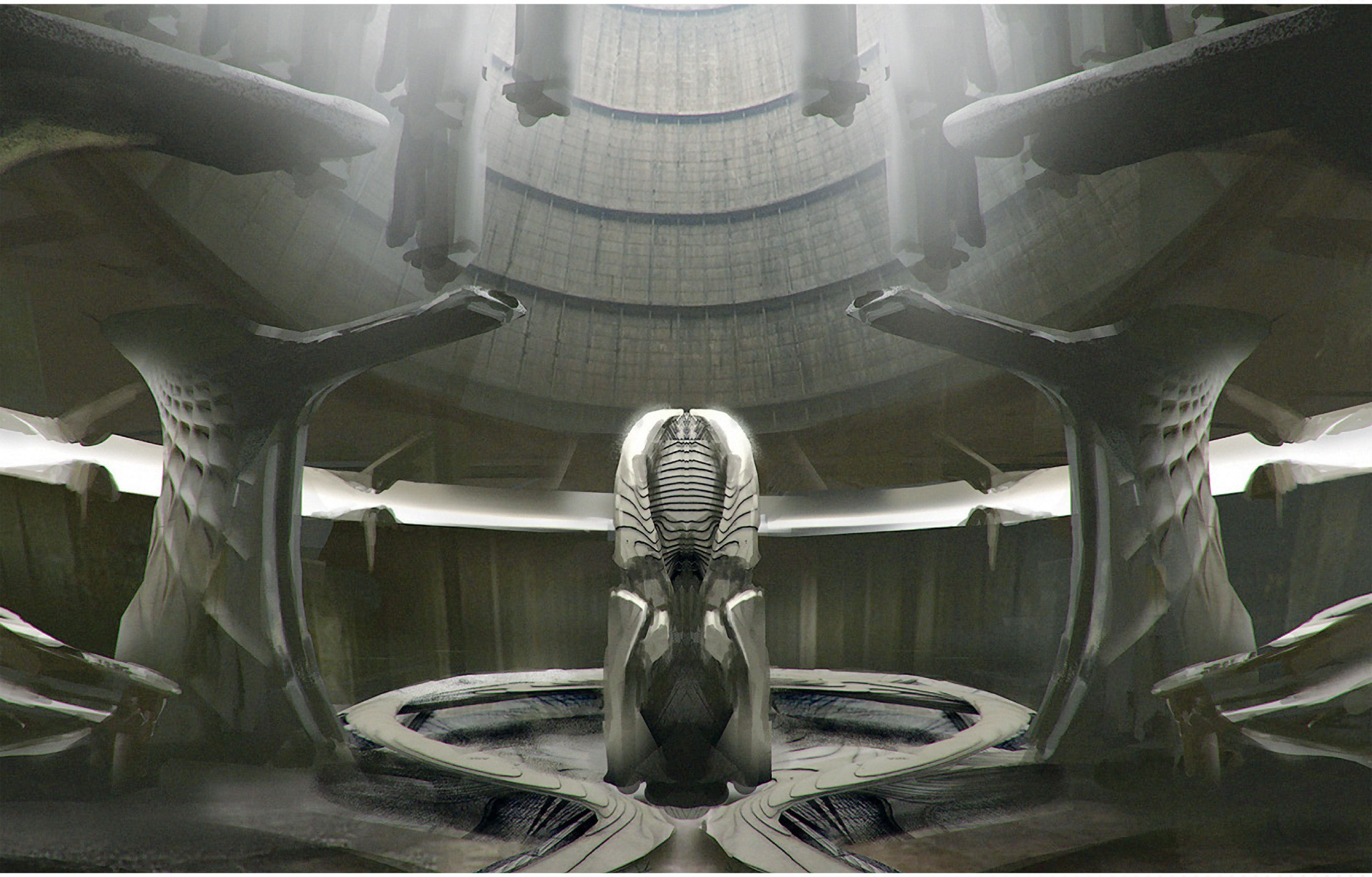


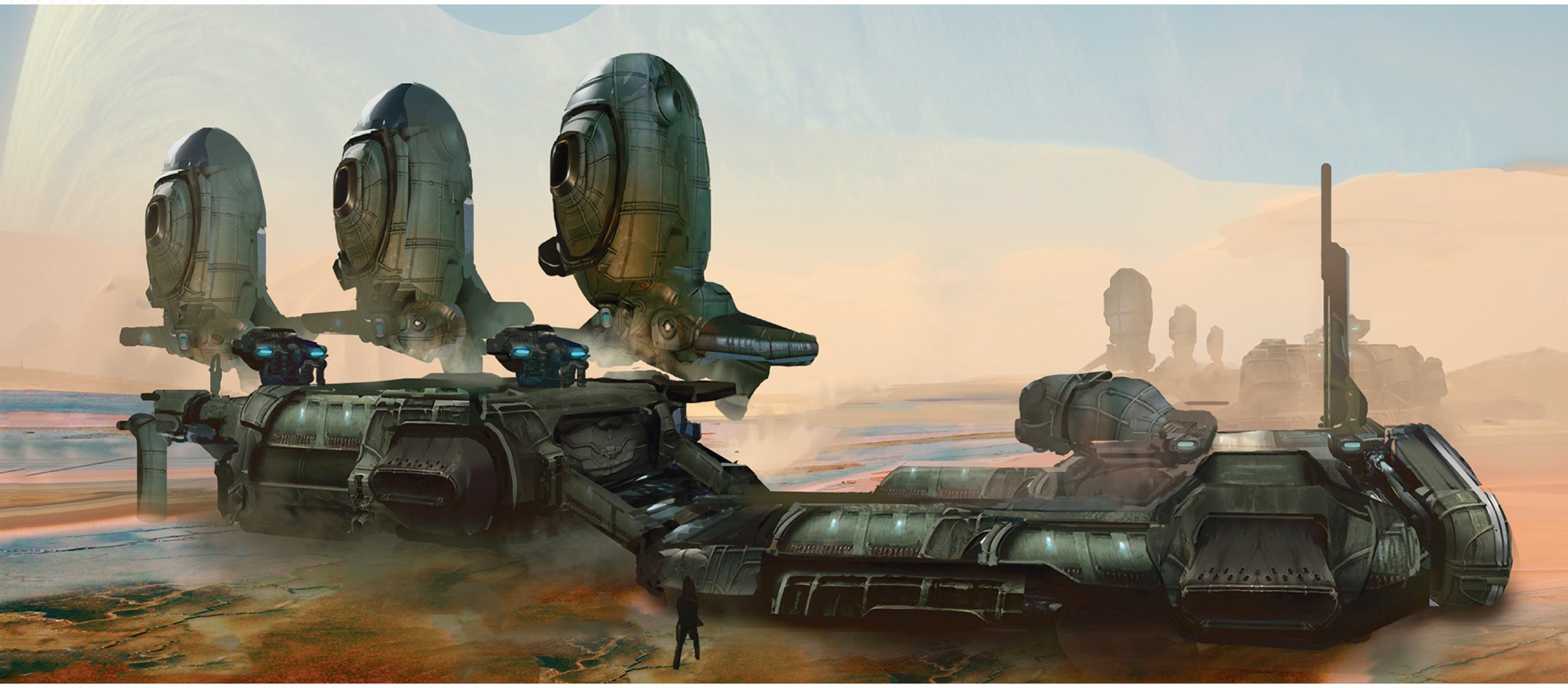


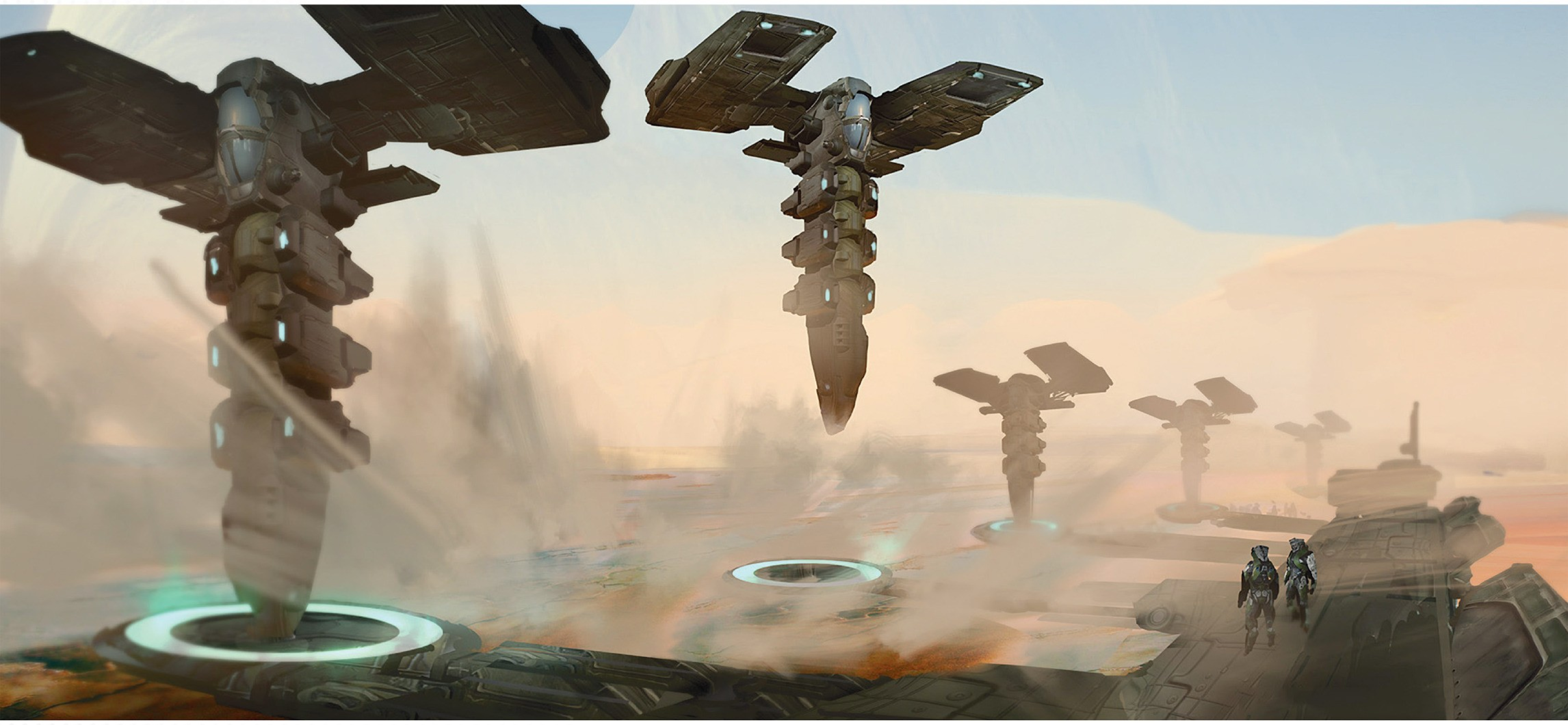
JM: There was a very creepy vibe to the exaltation process early on, which illustrated the loss of identity in the initiate. This was pretty disturbing, and we retained that feeling in the final game execution.

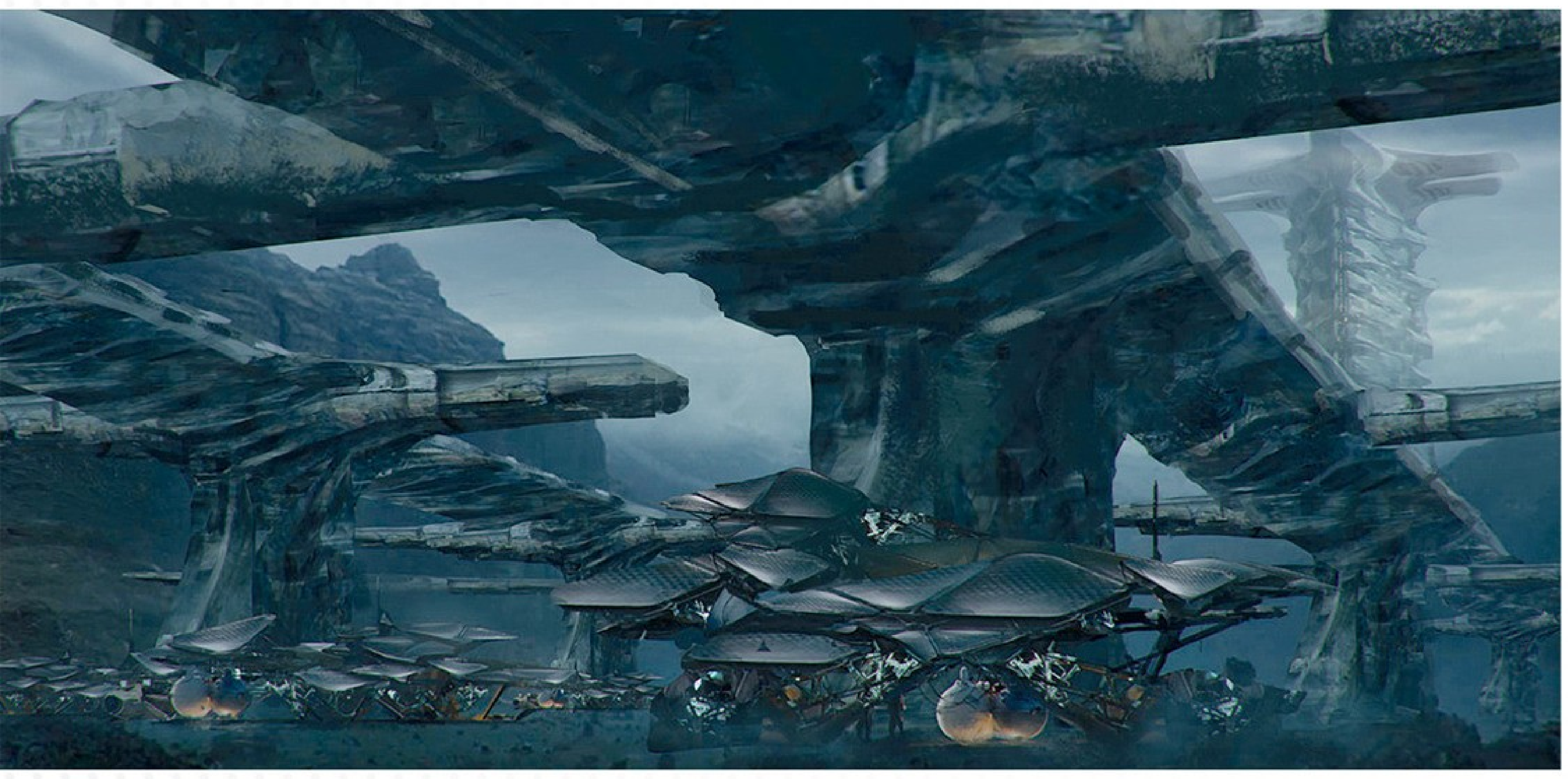


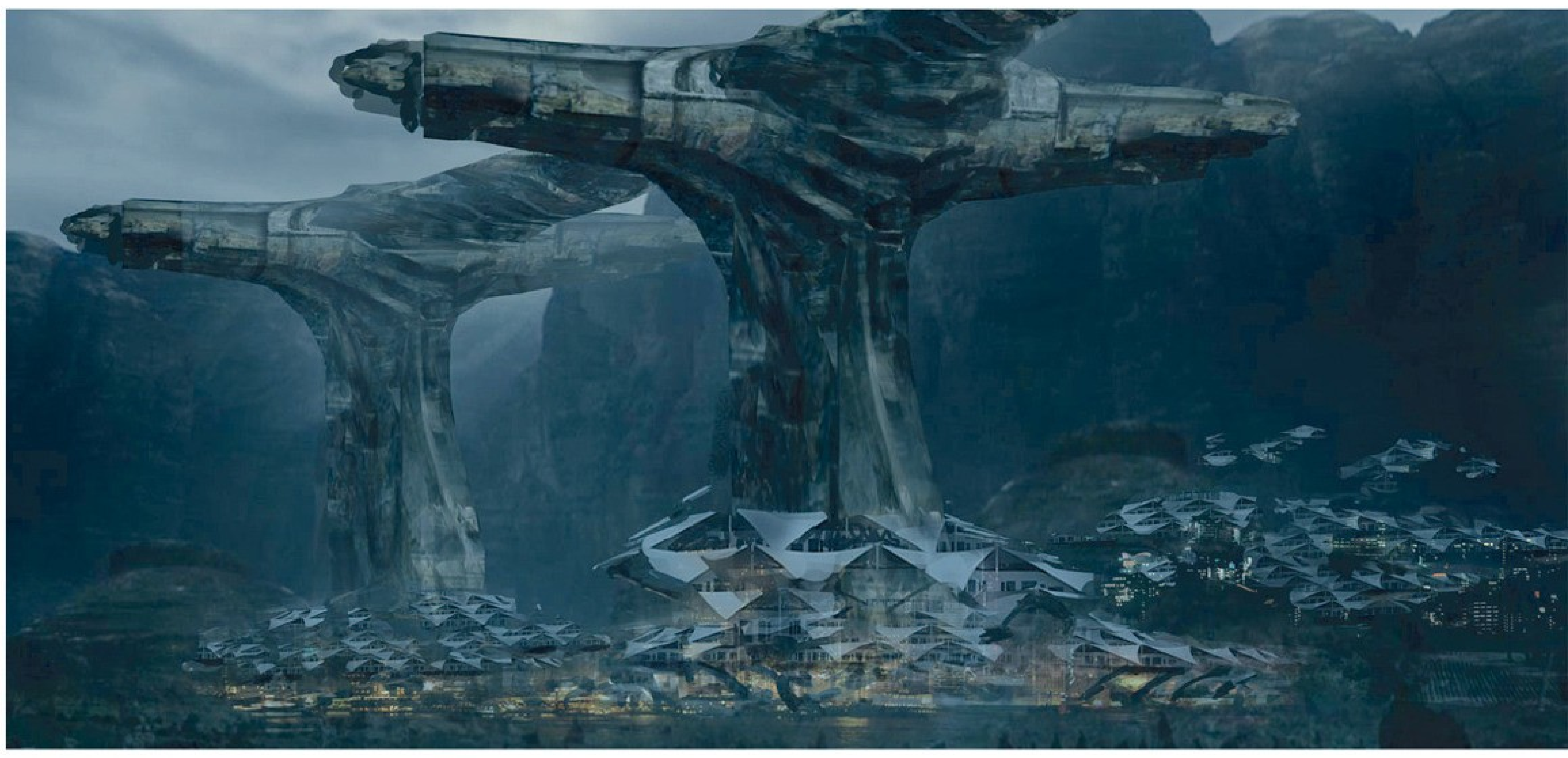


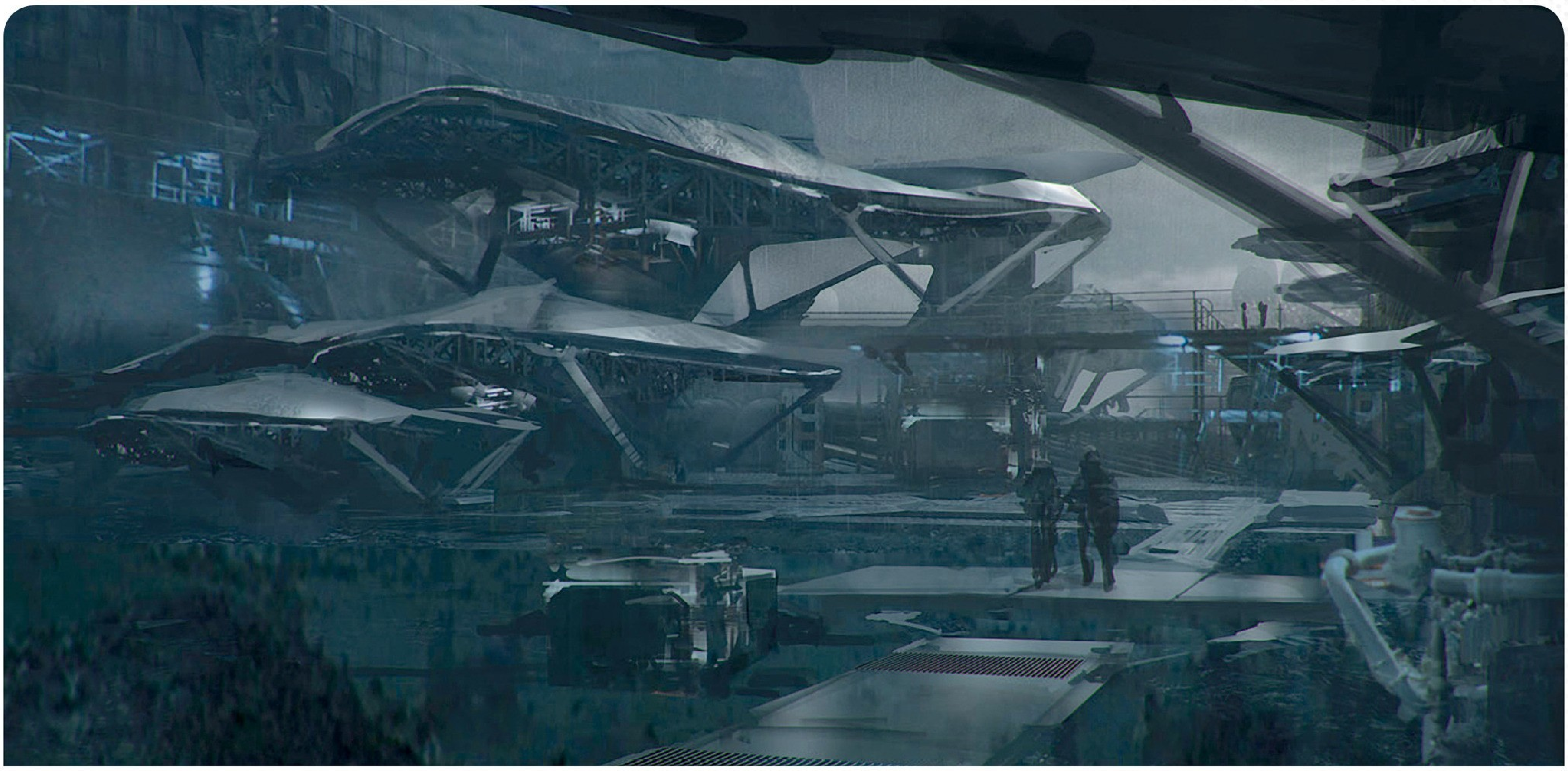


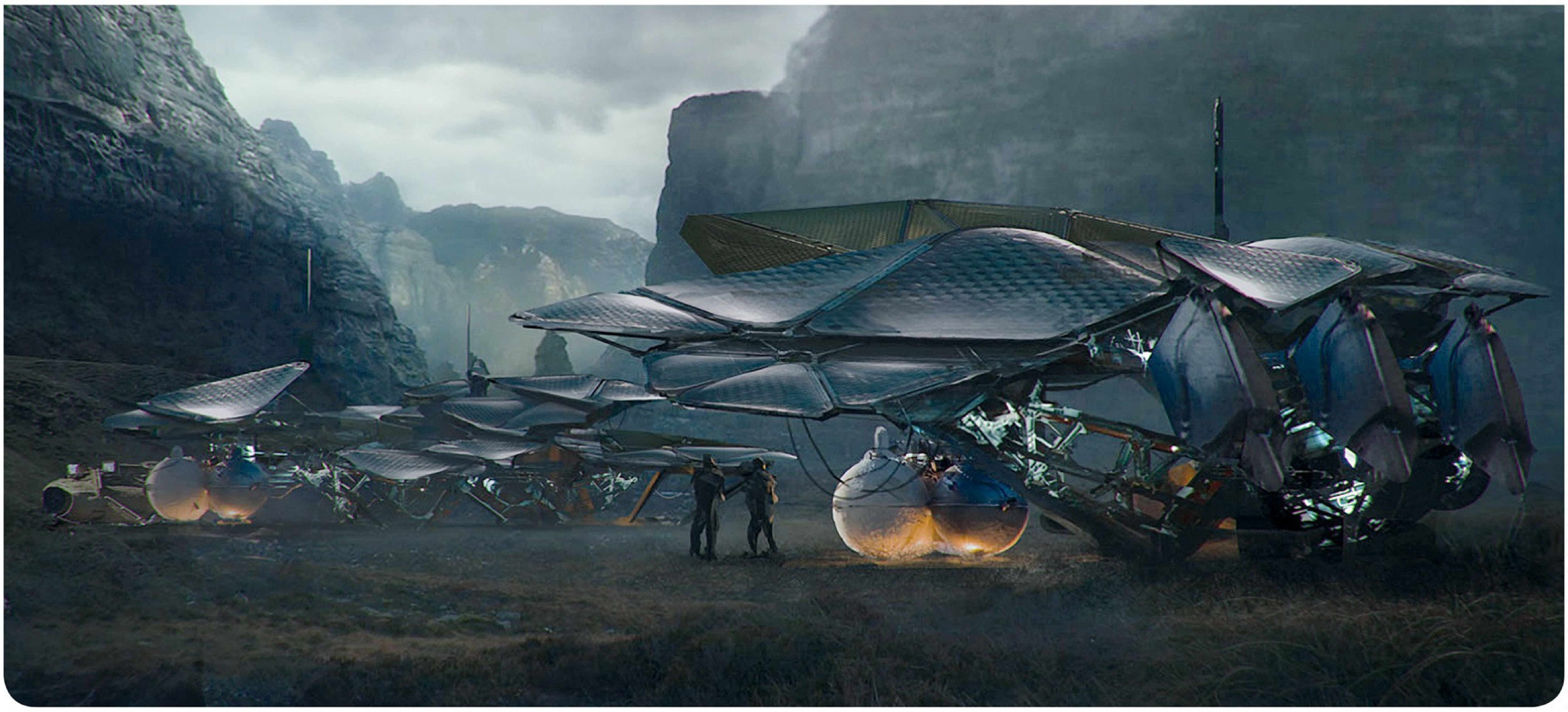


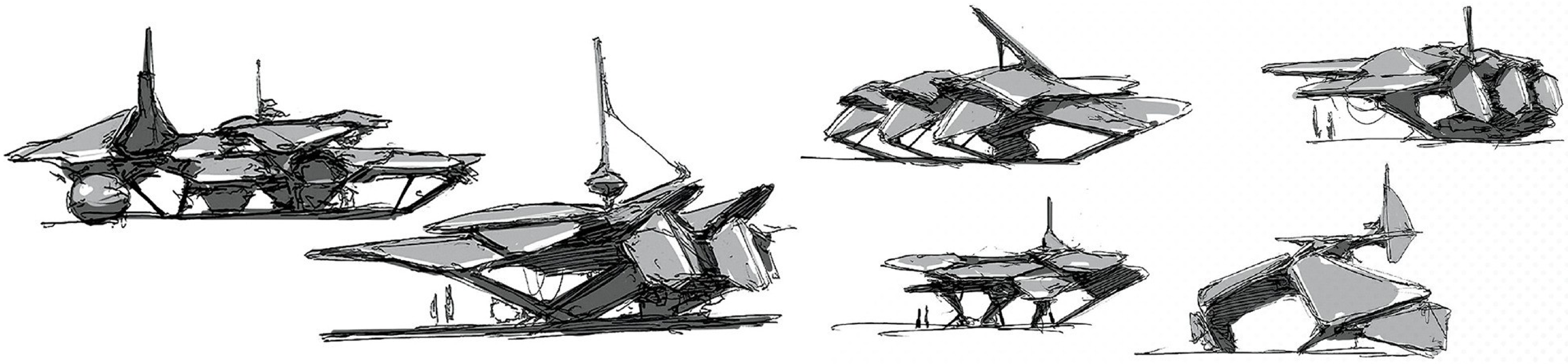




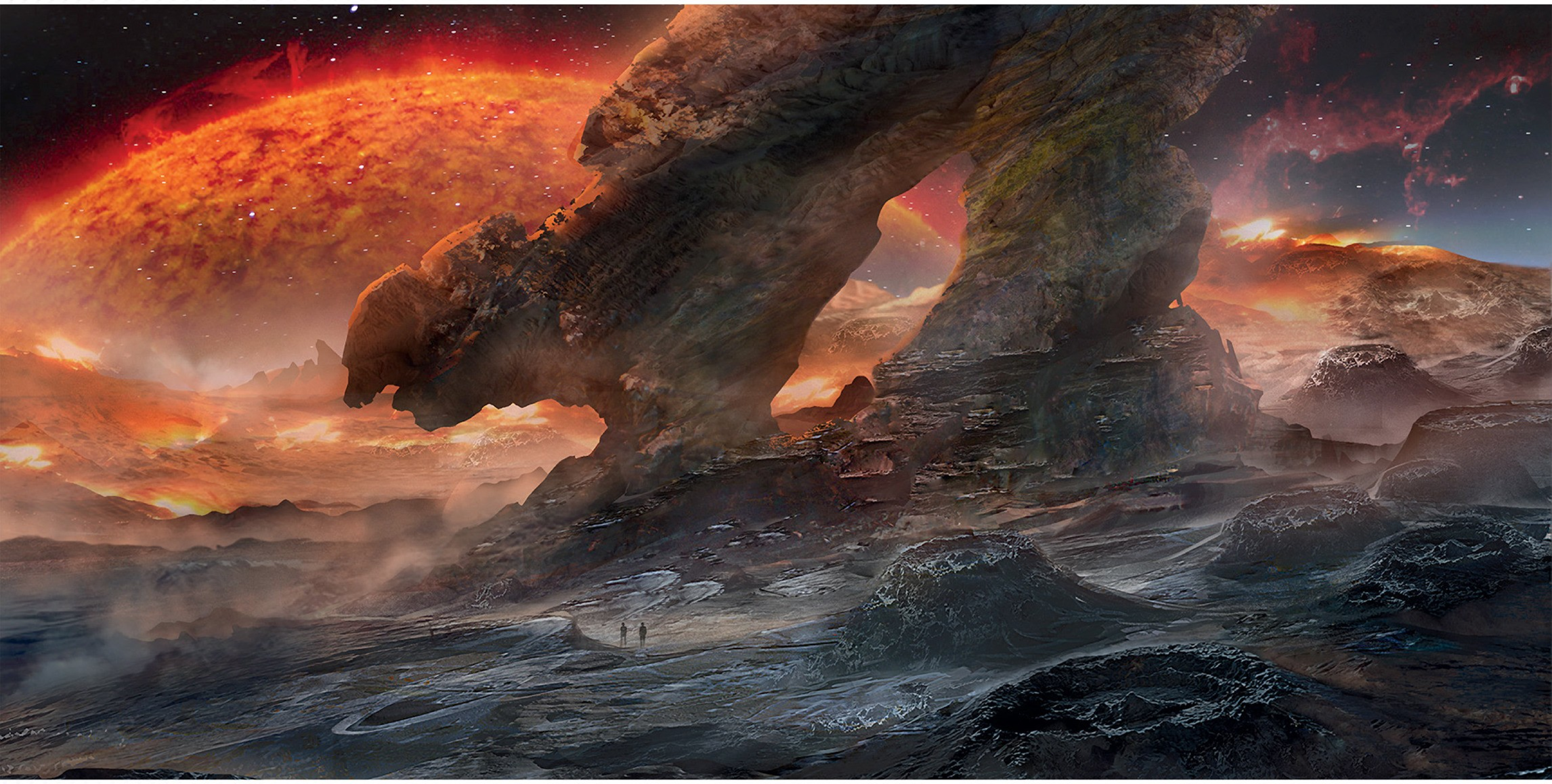


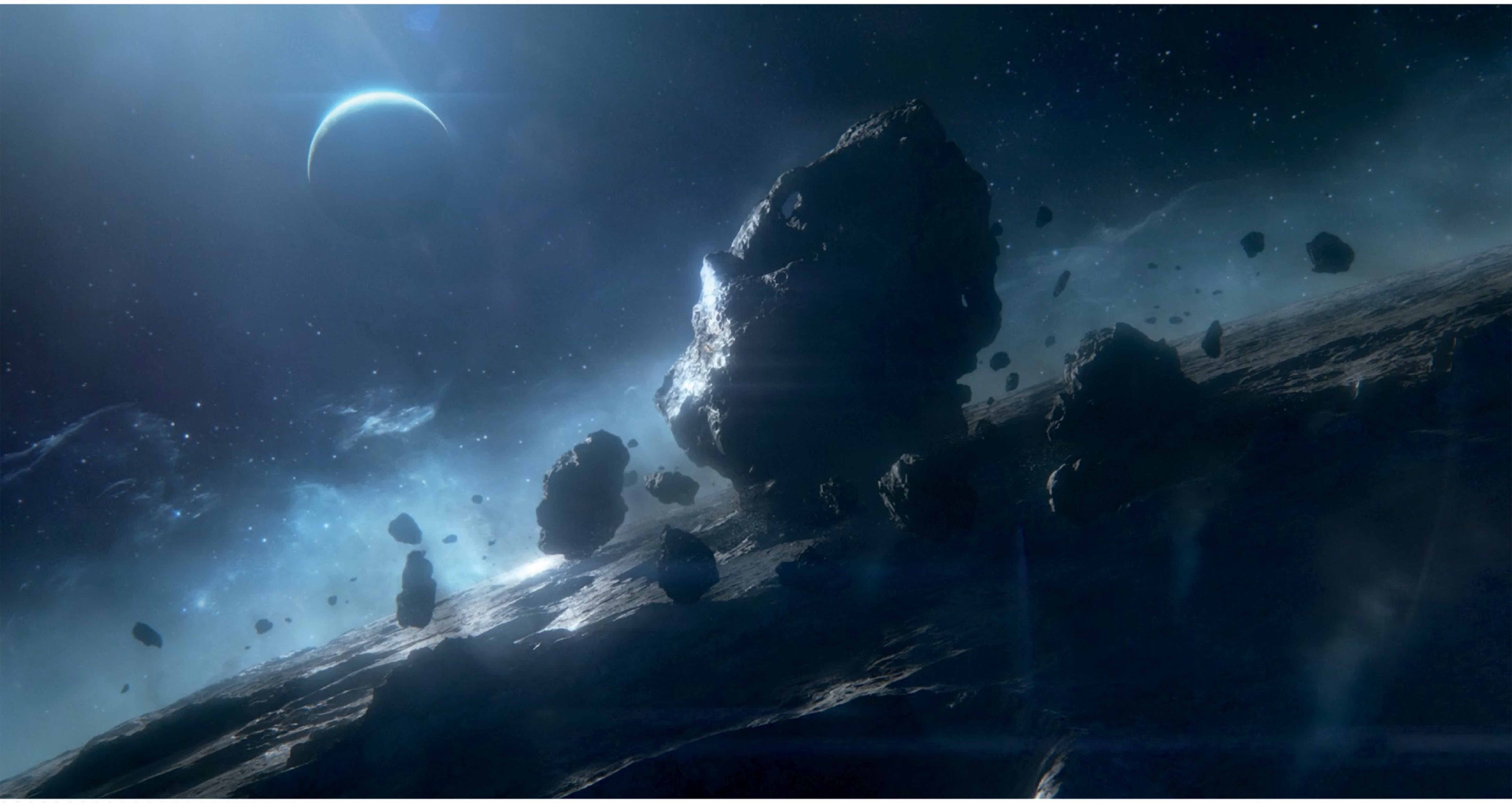






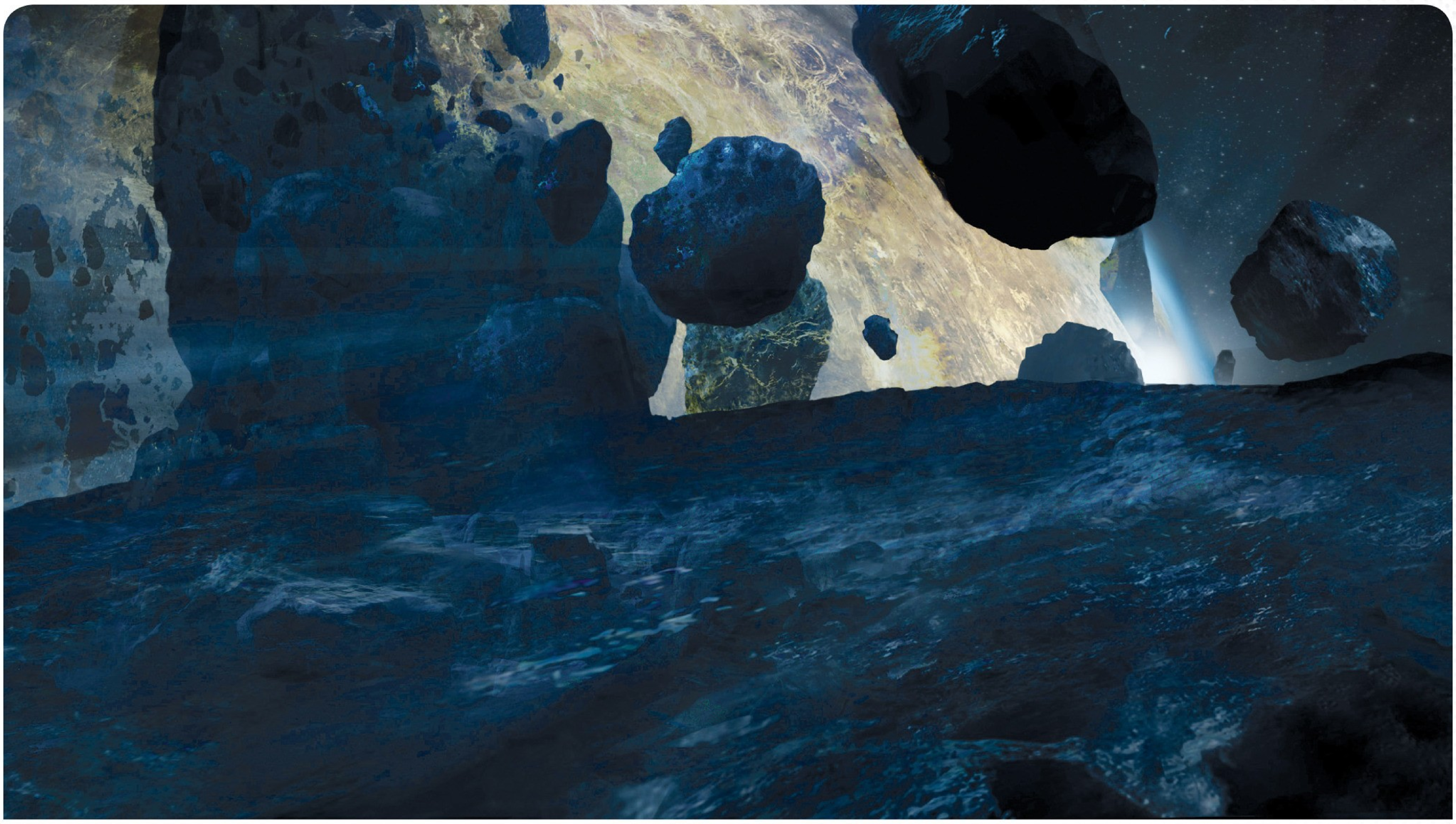
JM: On this page we have the angara shanty outpost. We were working toward a more run-down and industrial version of the angara outposts. On the facing page we have the kett outposts. The kett outposts needed to look distinct, so we came up with various elements and silhouettes to show the function of the outpost.

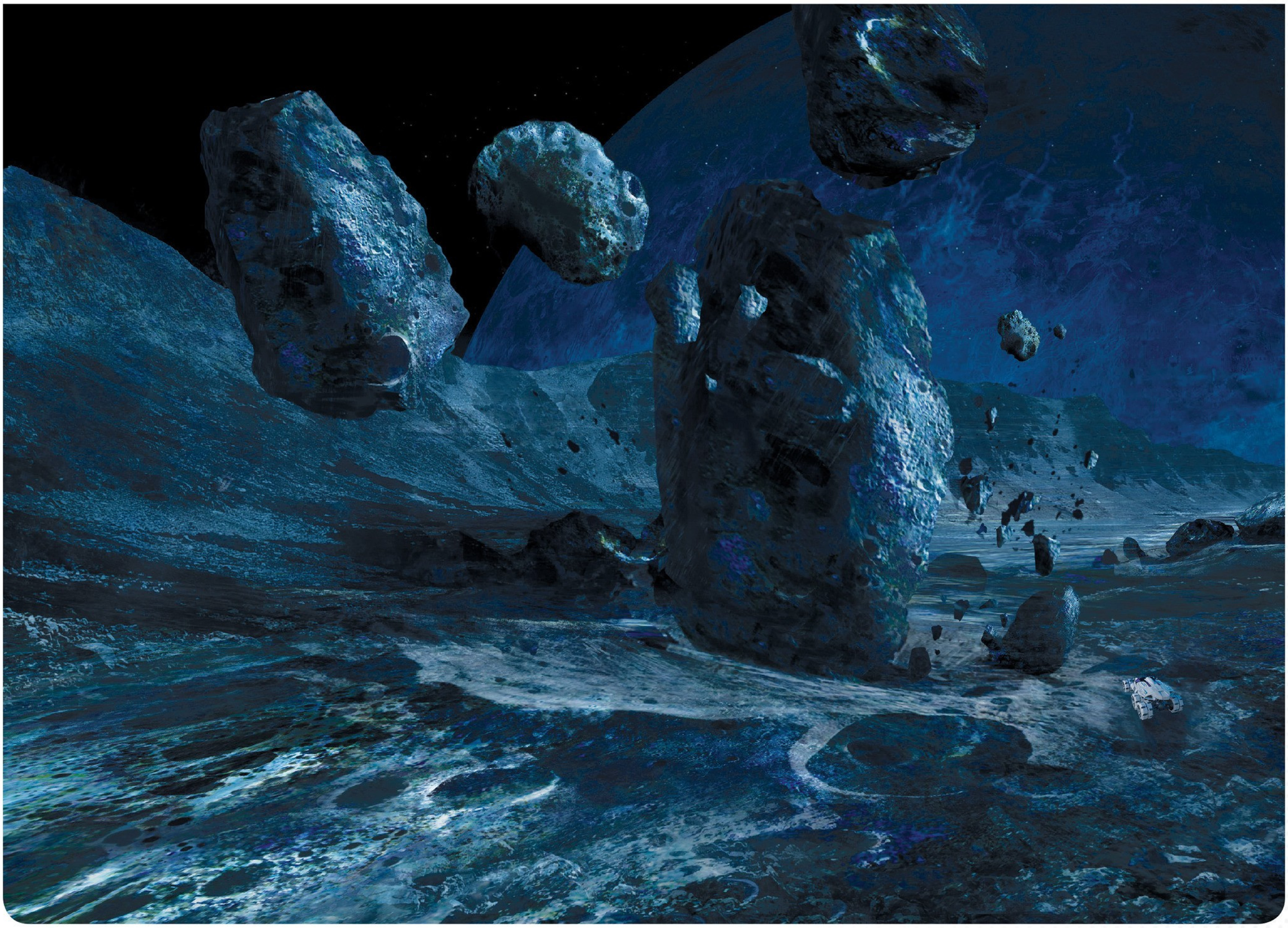


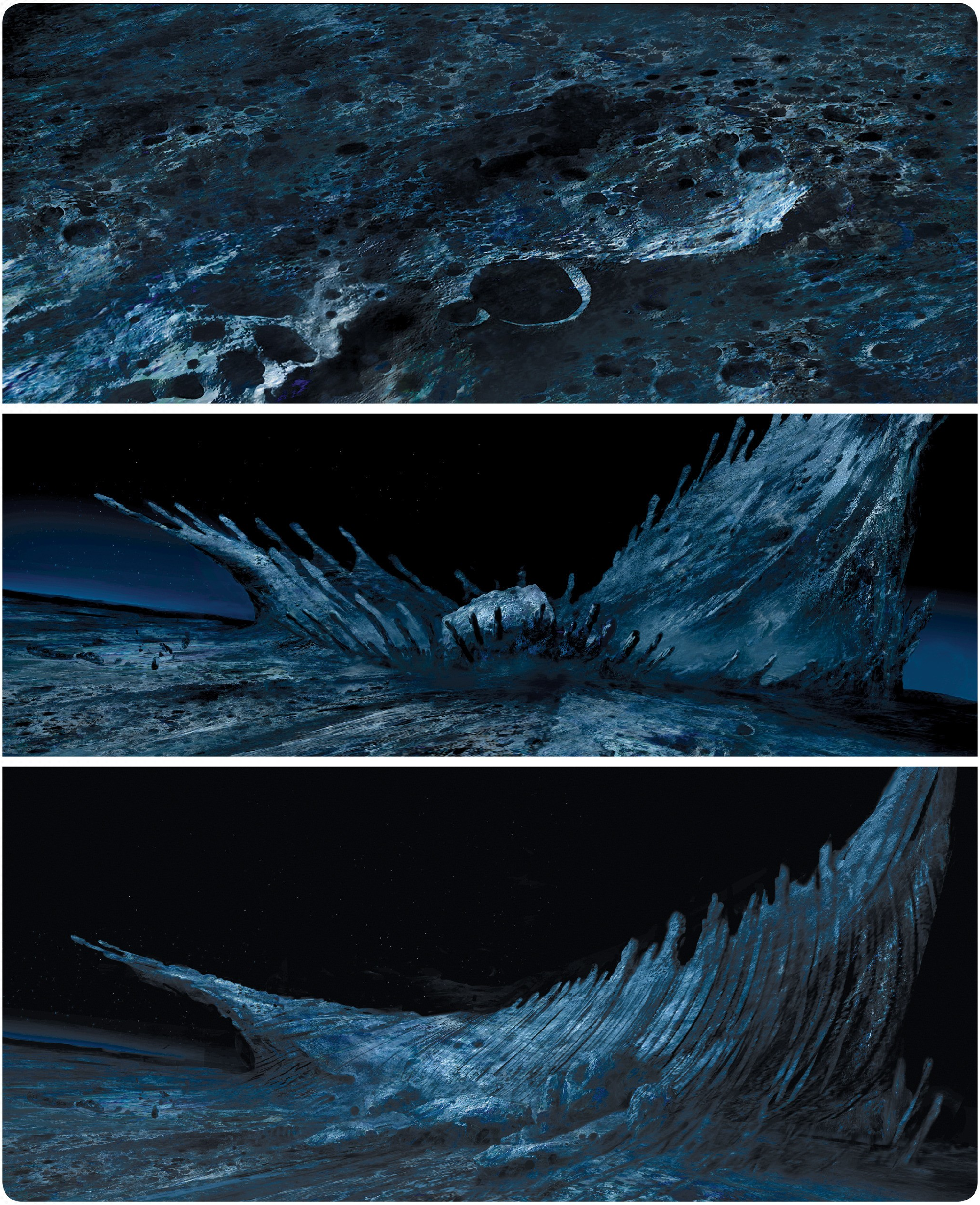


H-047c

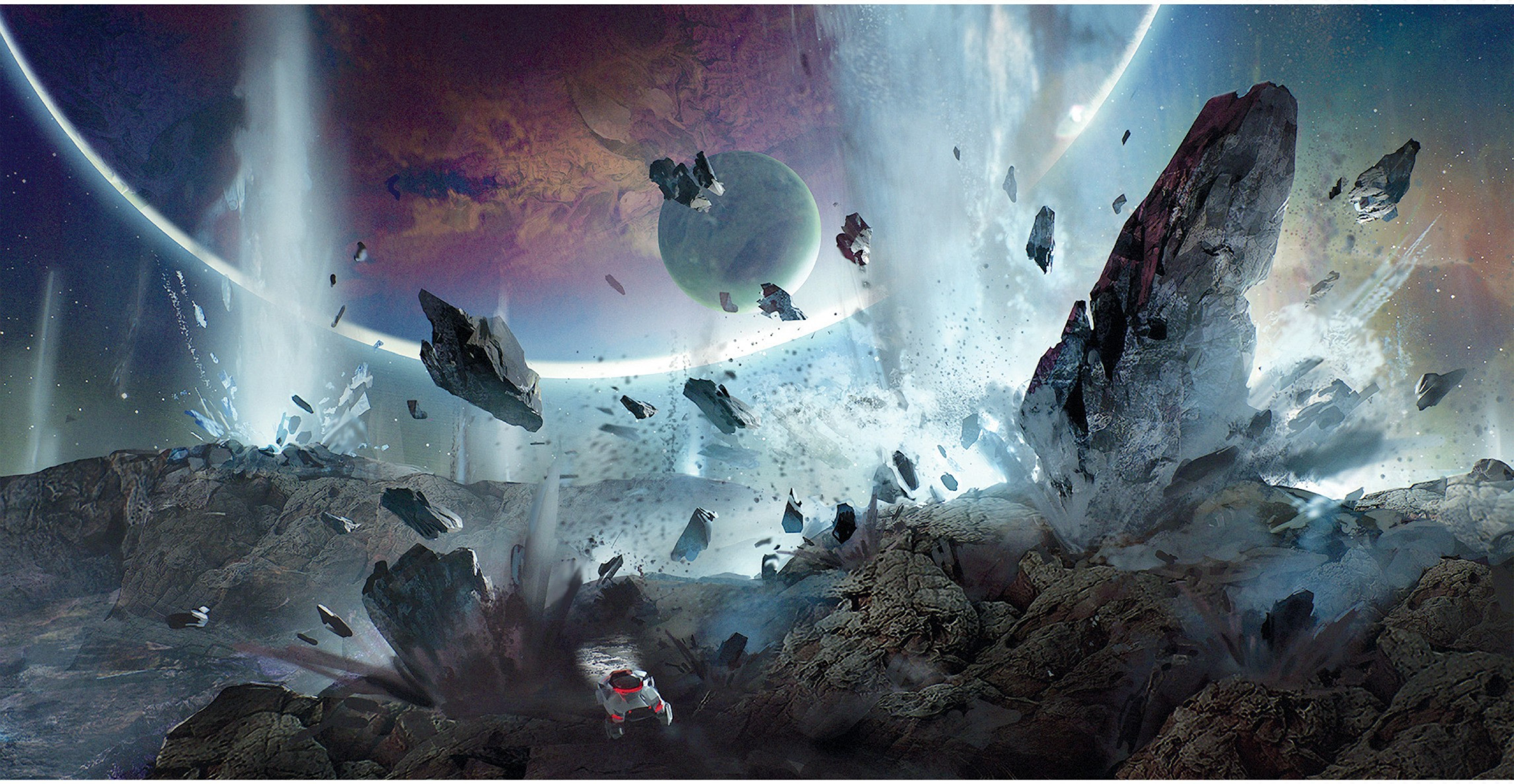
JM: One of the big hooks for our lunar levels was the idea of having huge impact craters and asteroids lodged in the surface. These would provide good landmarks to help the players orient themselves, while also providing a sense of scale. Having a cluster of asteroids lingering in the atmosphere just above the player really helps sell the low-atmosphere nature of the moons while also feeling foreboding.

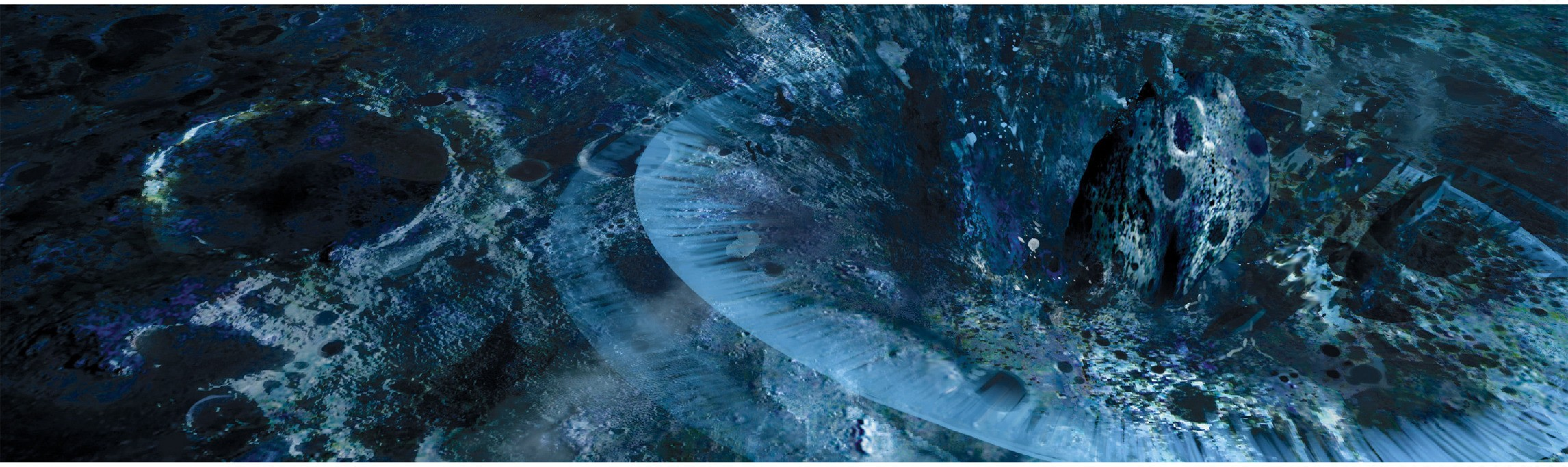


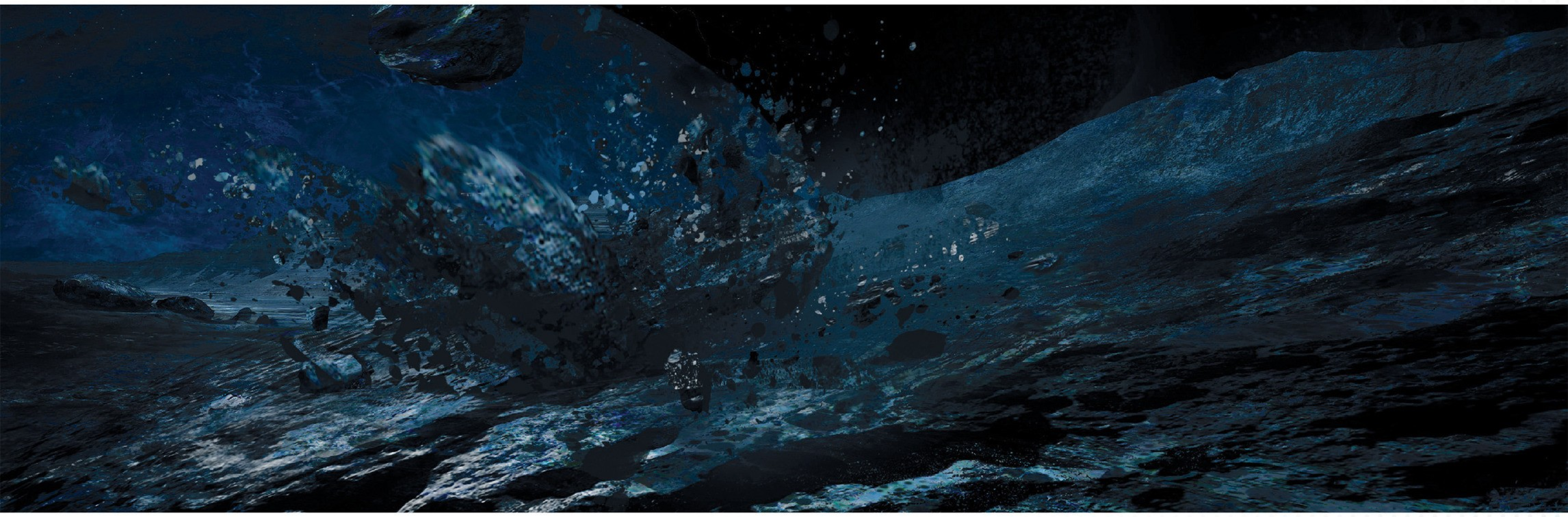


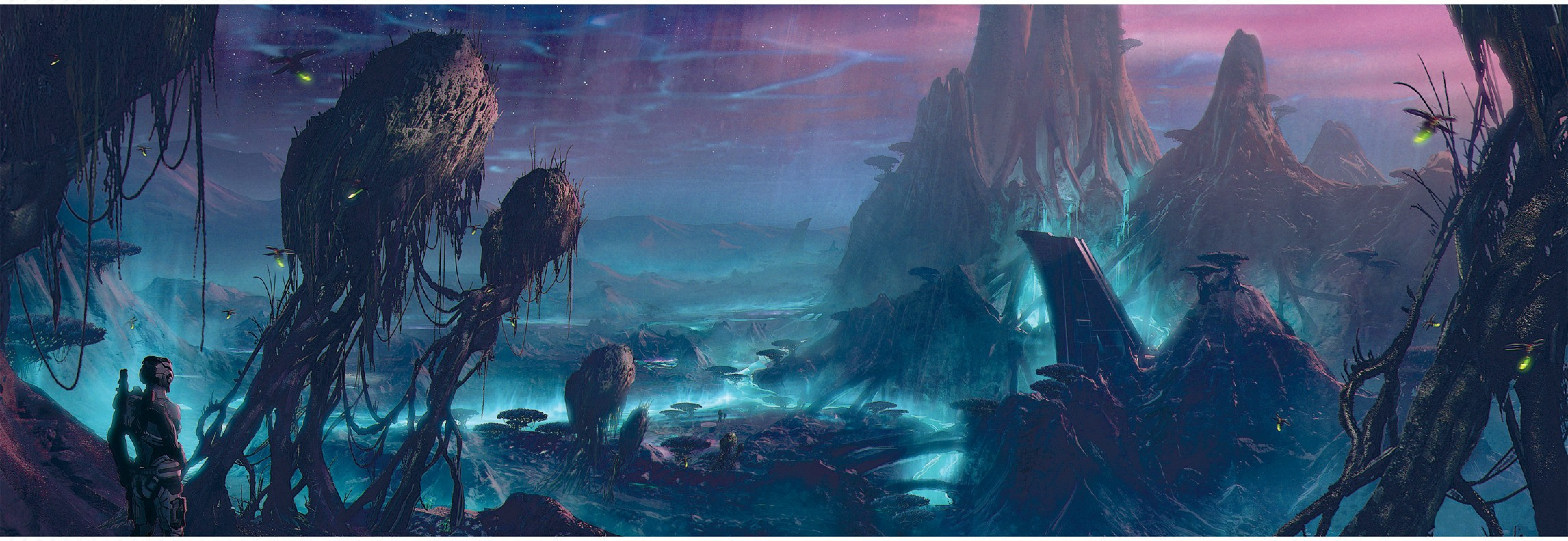


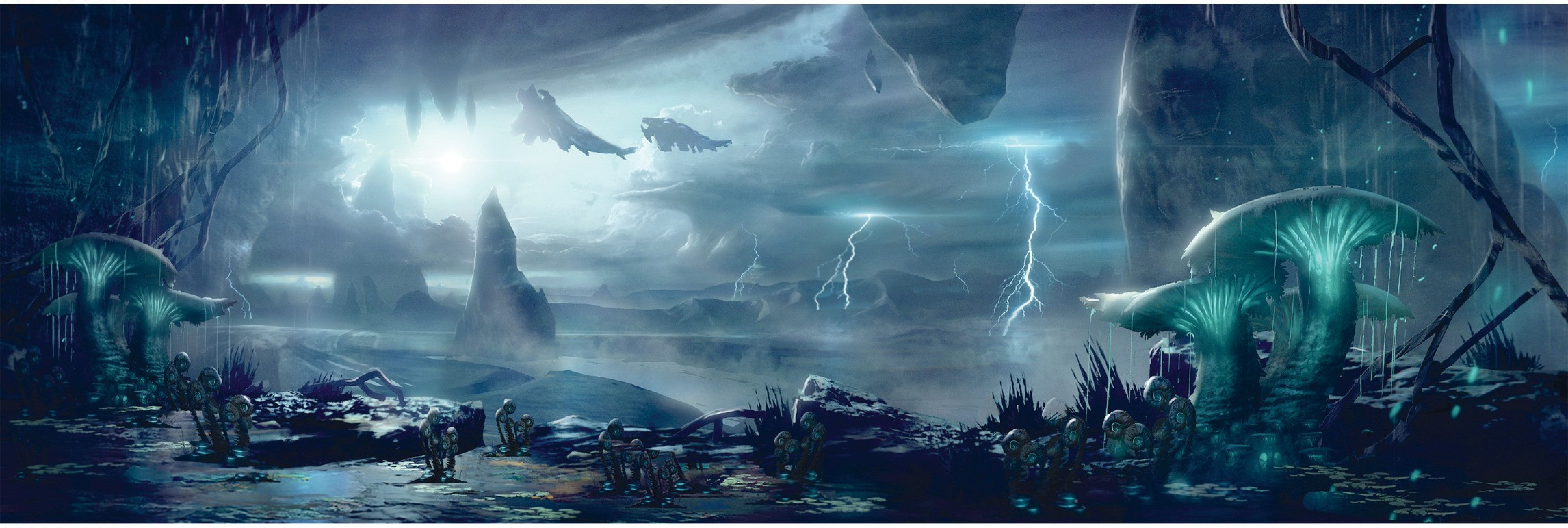
JM: One of the ideas we played around with was the idea of using flash-frozen asteroid impacts to give the lunar levels more identity. These impacts create a variety of shapes and silhouettes that tell a bit of a story, rather than just being a pile of settled dirt and sand.

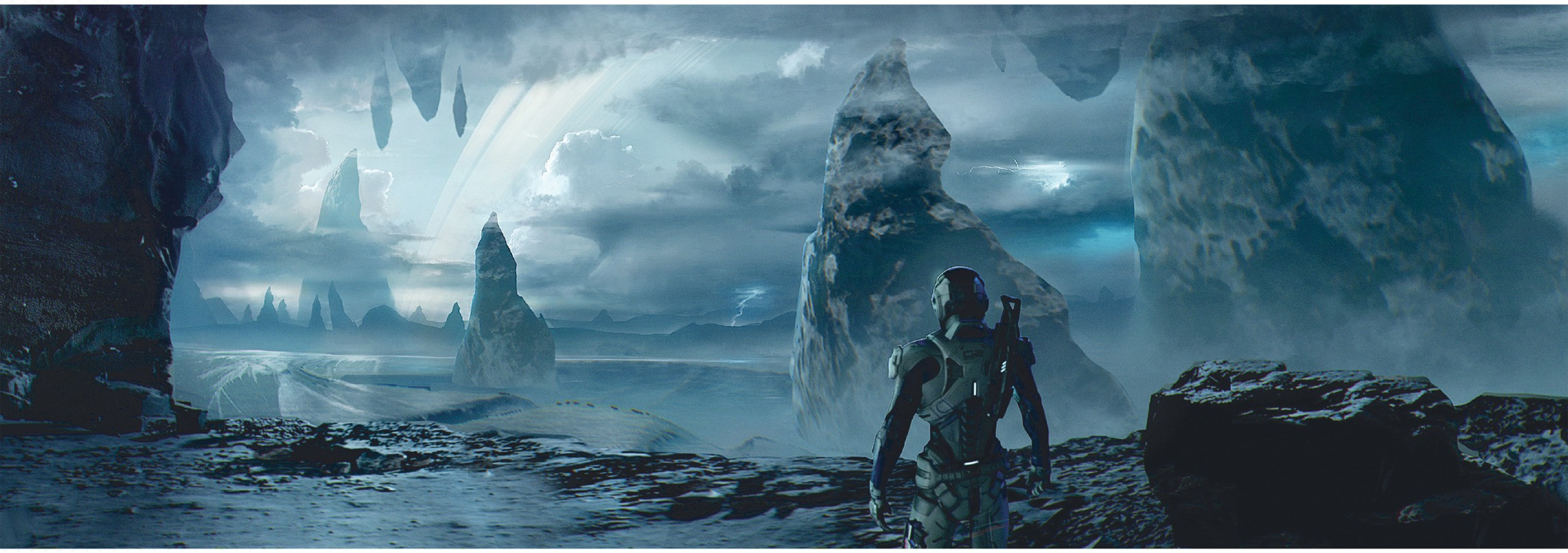






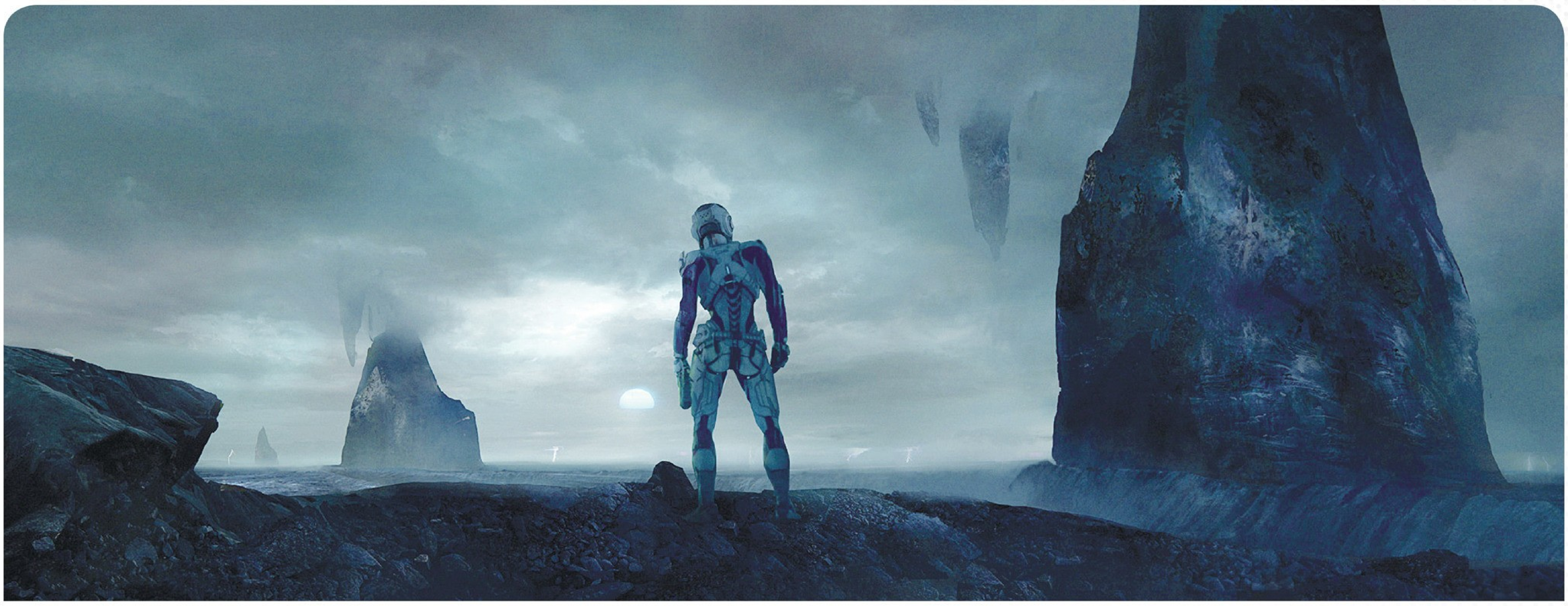


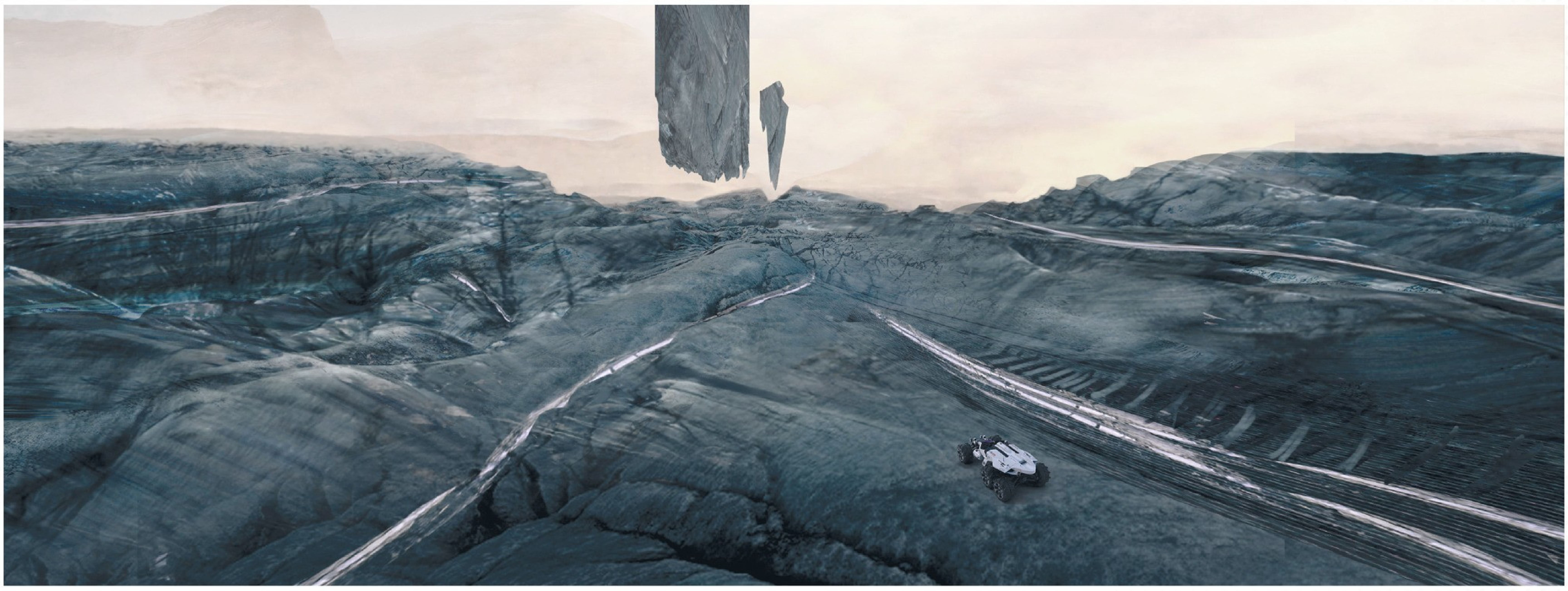


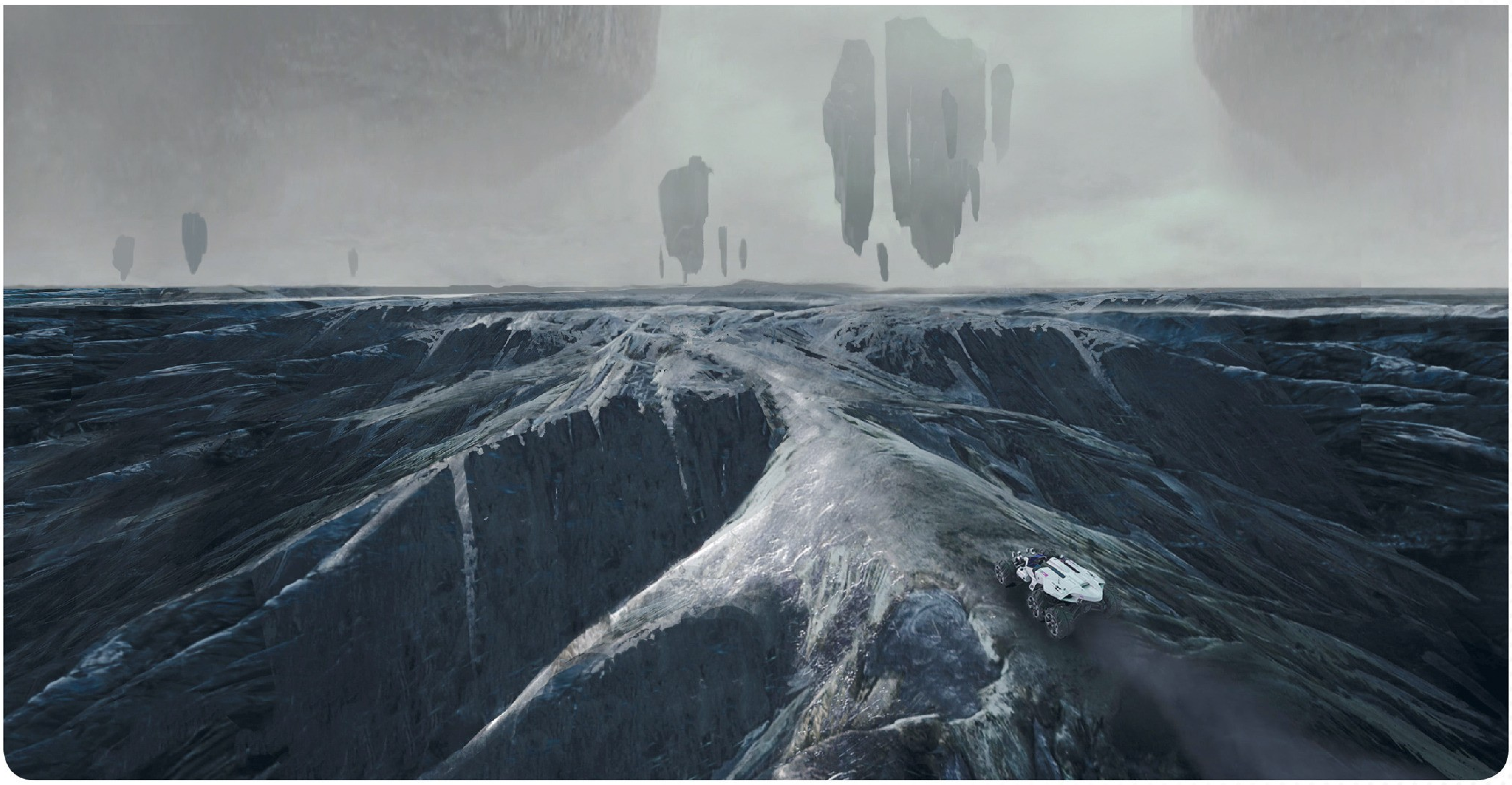


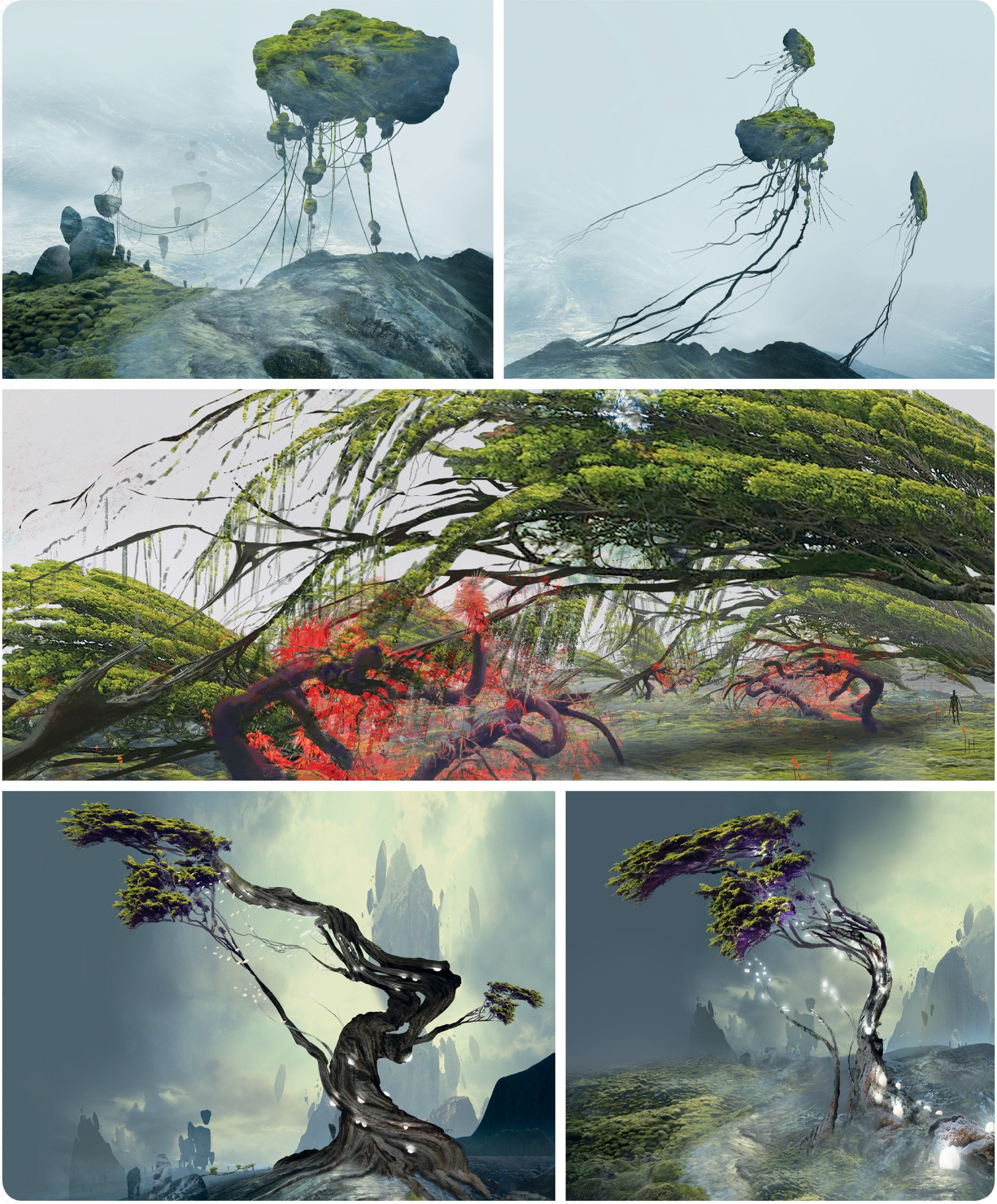
HAVARL

JM: These are concepts for our metallic level. This is where we really deployed the idea of low gravity. We went with the notion that the magnetic poles were somehow affecting these metal rocks, which caused them to migrate over great distances through the terrain and eventually elevate up into the atmosphere. This provided some great scale and really dwarfed the player in the environment. This helped us sell the idea that *we're* the aliens here.

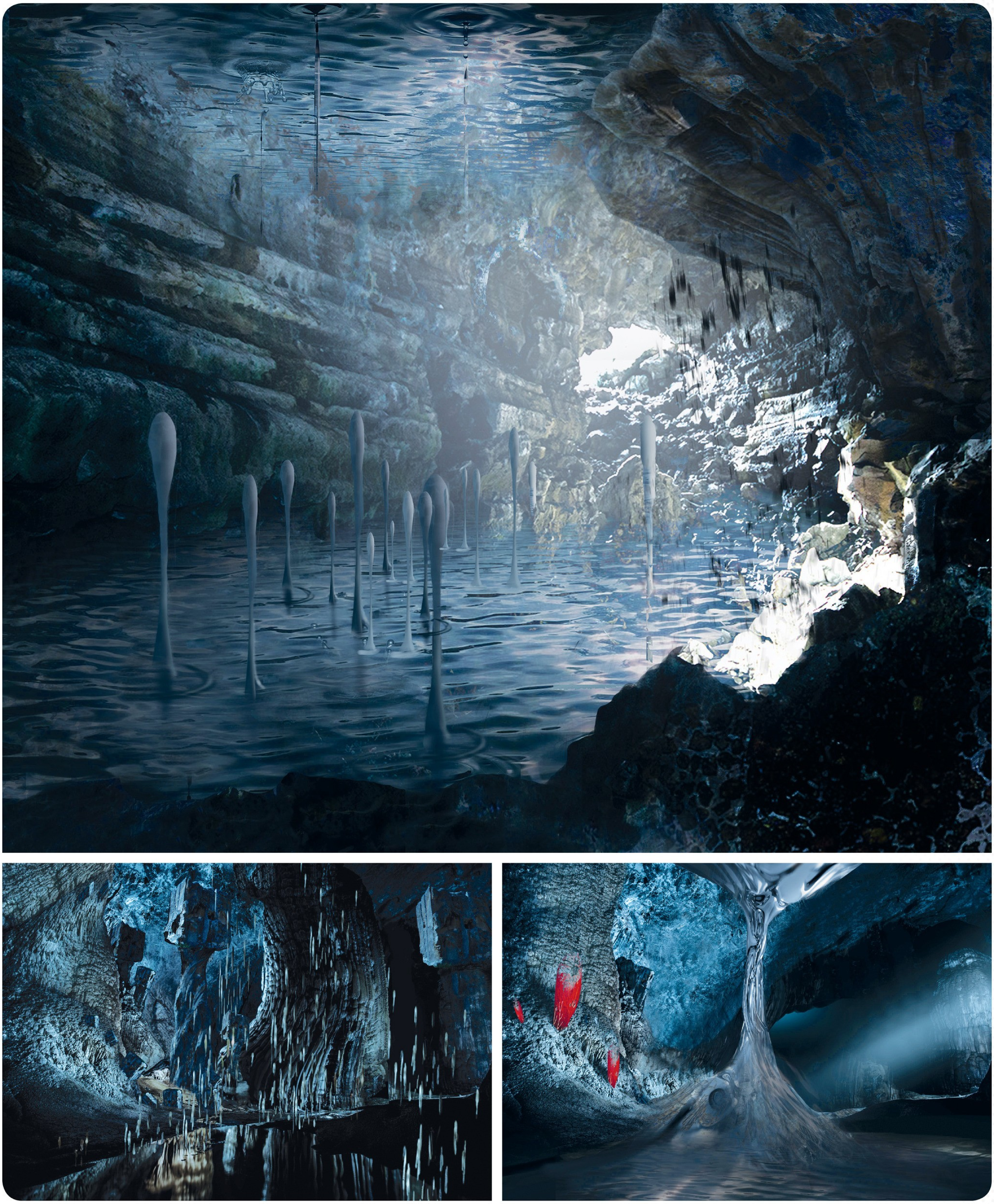




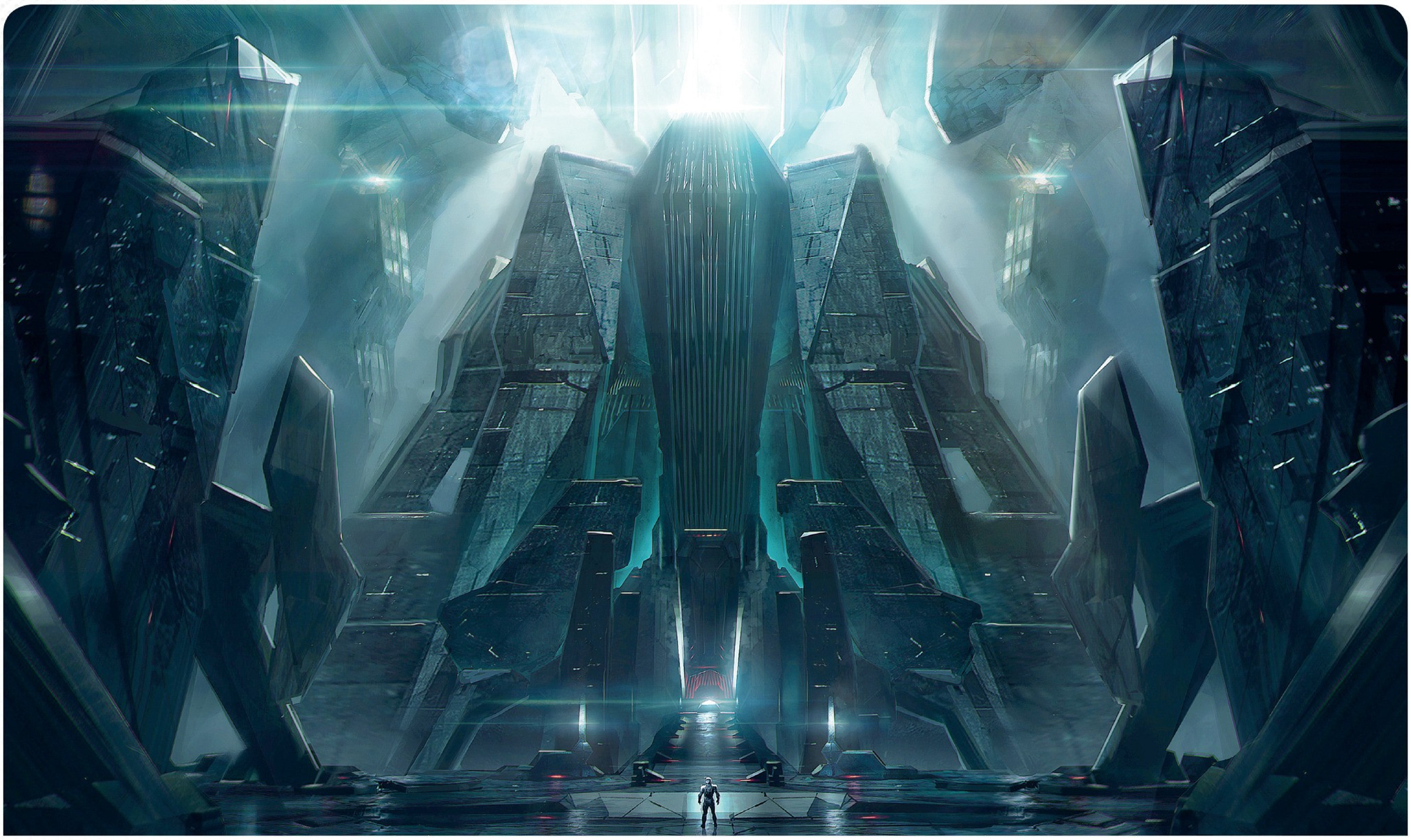


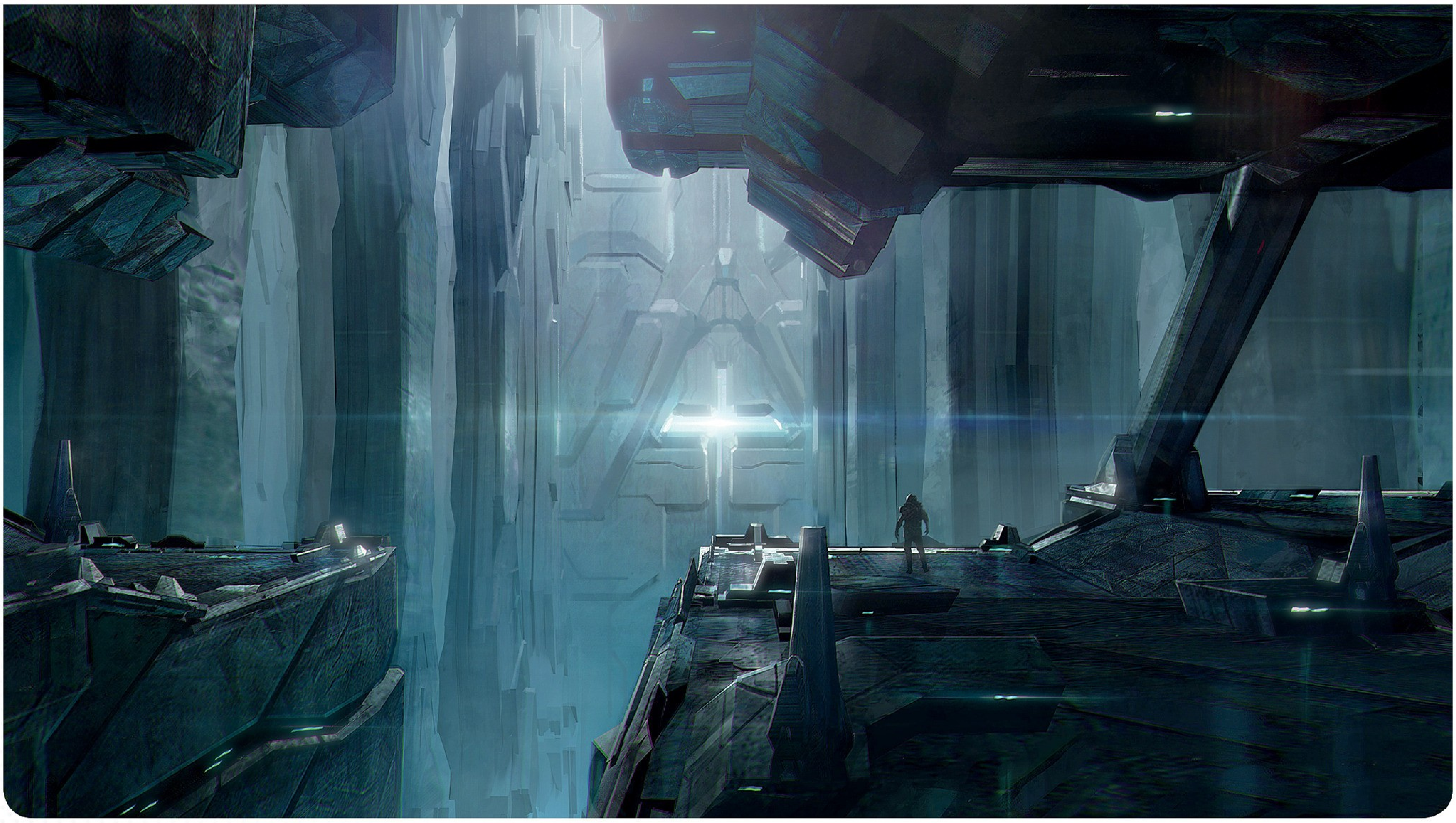


JM: On this page, we have examples of the foliage on the metallic planets. We felt that we could play up the theme of the magnetic poles really affecting everything on the planet; for instance, the trees themselves may have metallic qualities to them that would be affected by the magnetic poles. On the facing page you can see liquid metal veins of silver cutting across the landscape.



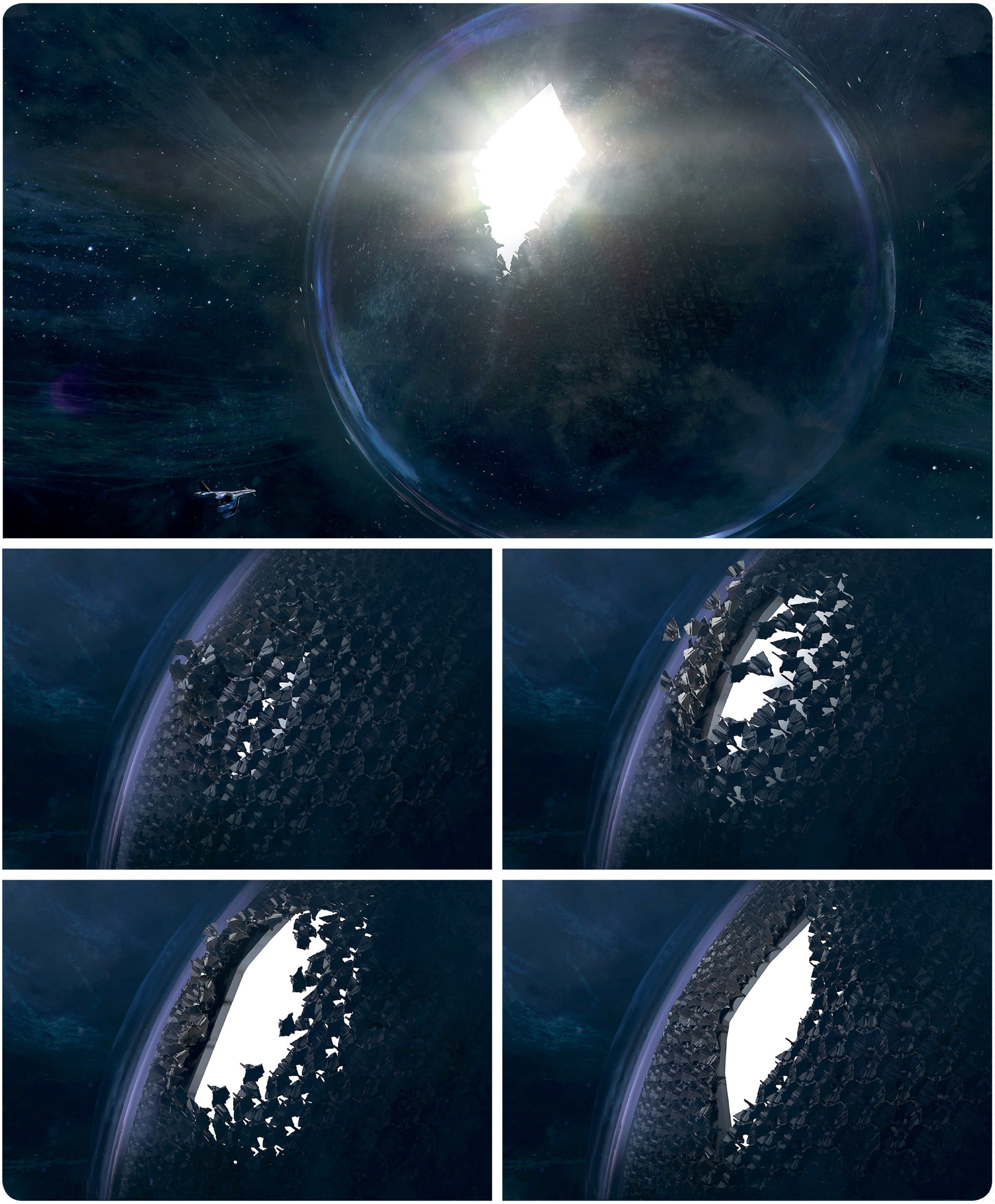
JM: These are examples of subterranean metallic caves. We experimented with making distinct metallic caves that would feature flowing liquid metal. This substance would also be affected magnetically, and as such, be pulled in odd directions.



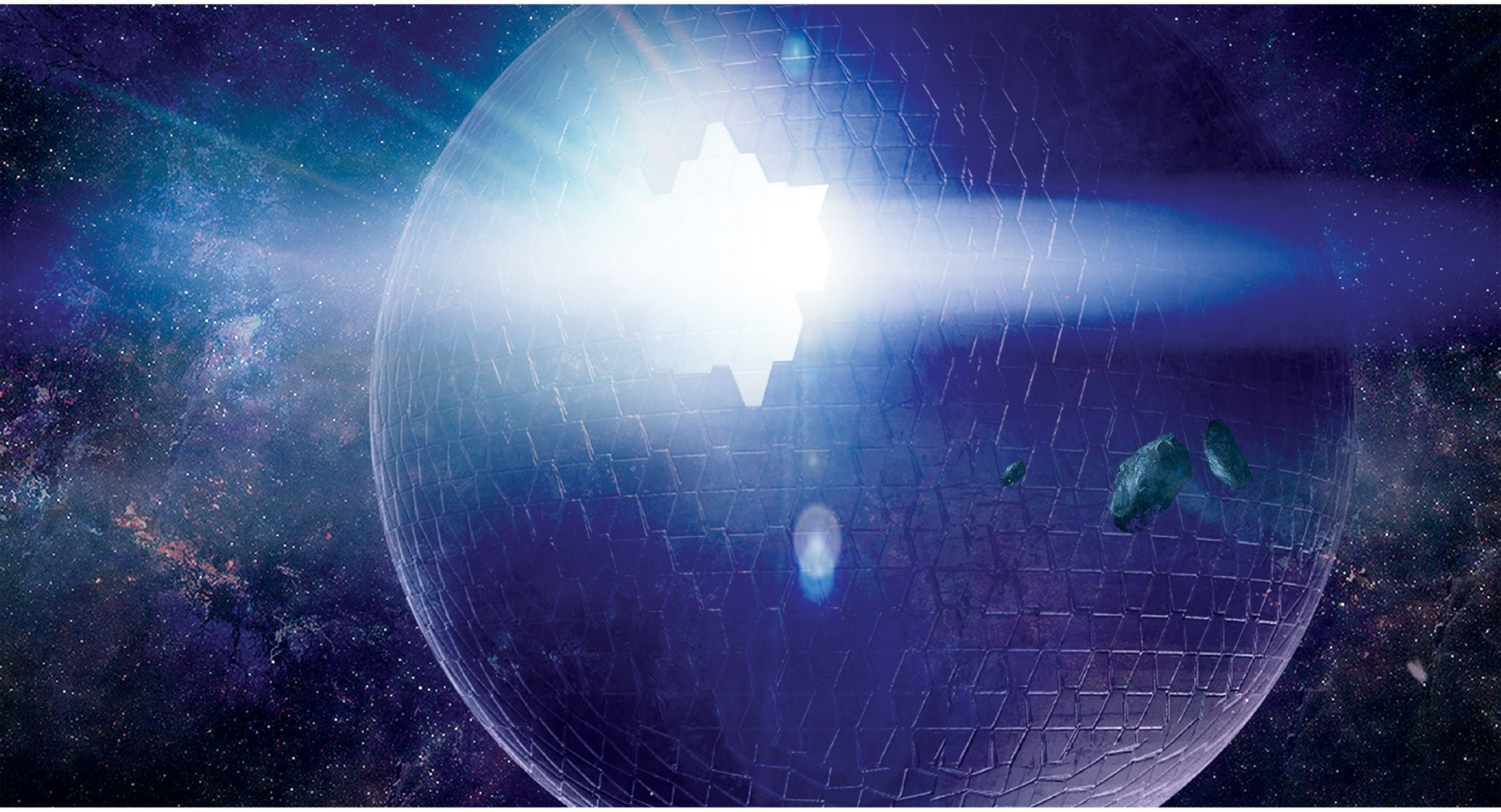


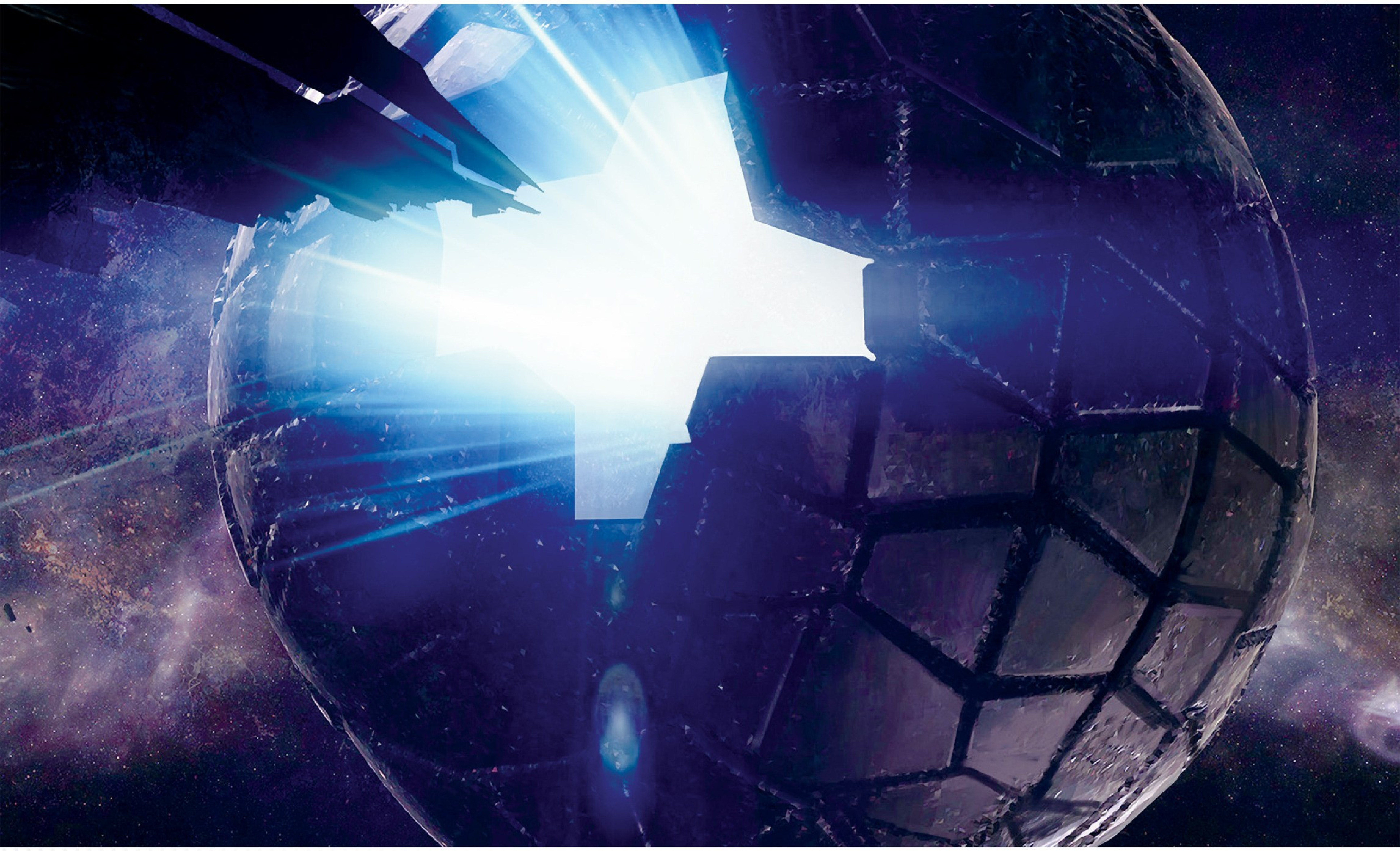
MERIDIAN

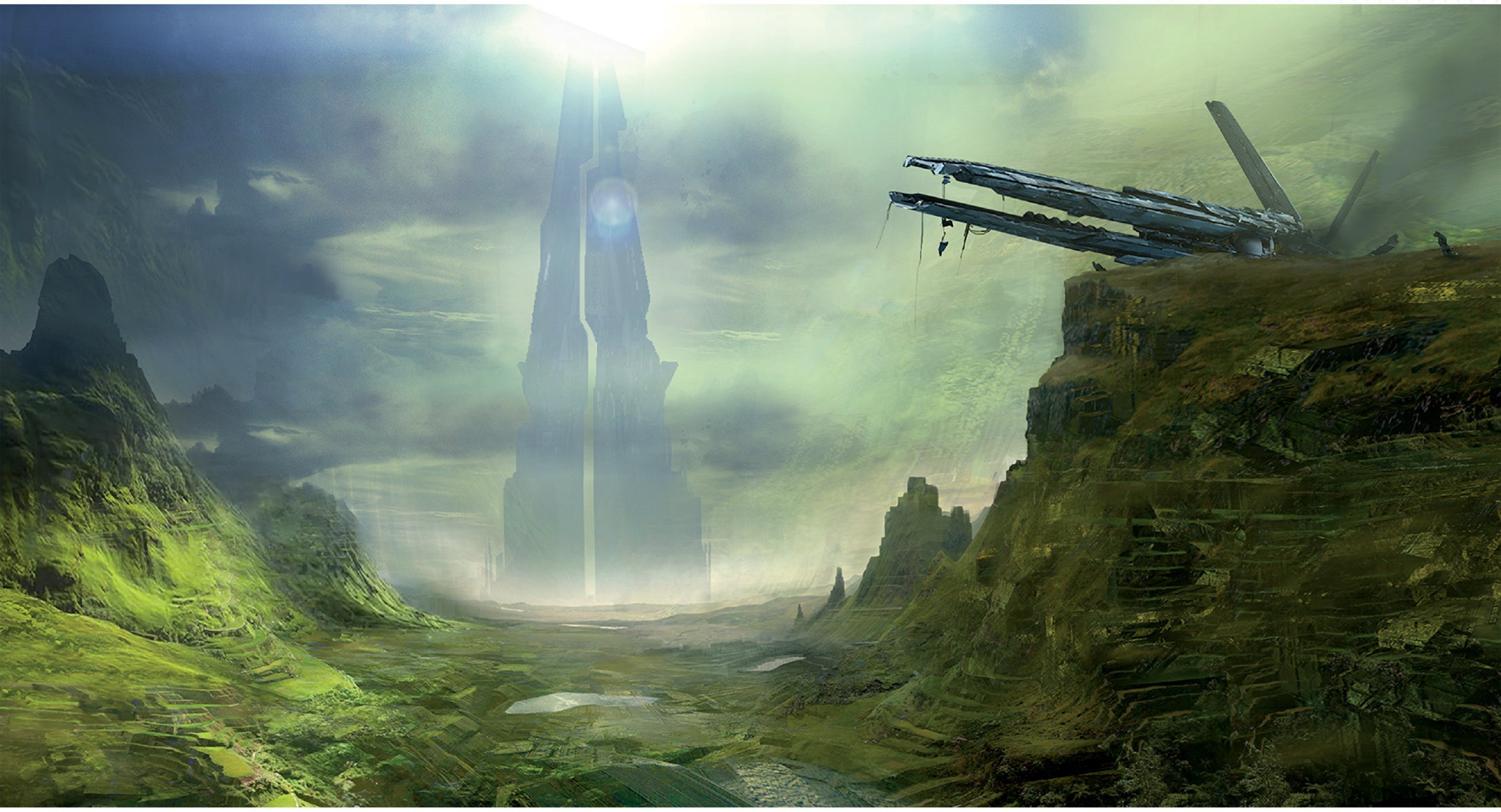
NL: Remnant architecture was always meant to be mysterious and this was achieved by pulling from abstract design and differentiating scales.

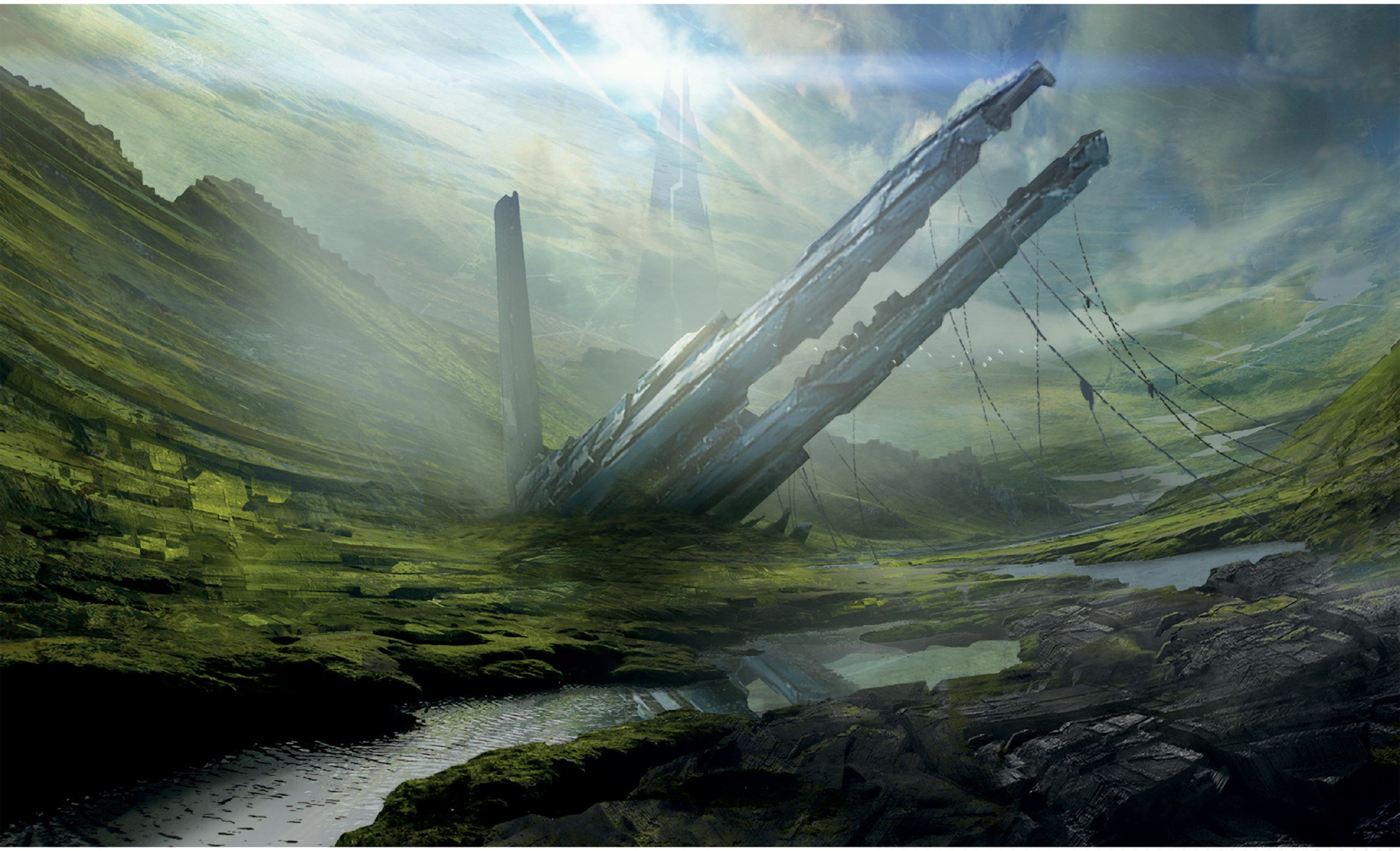


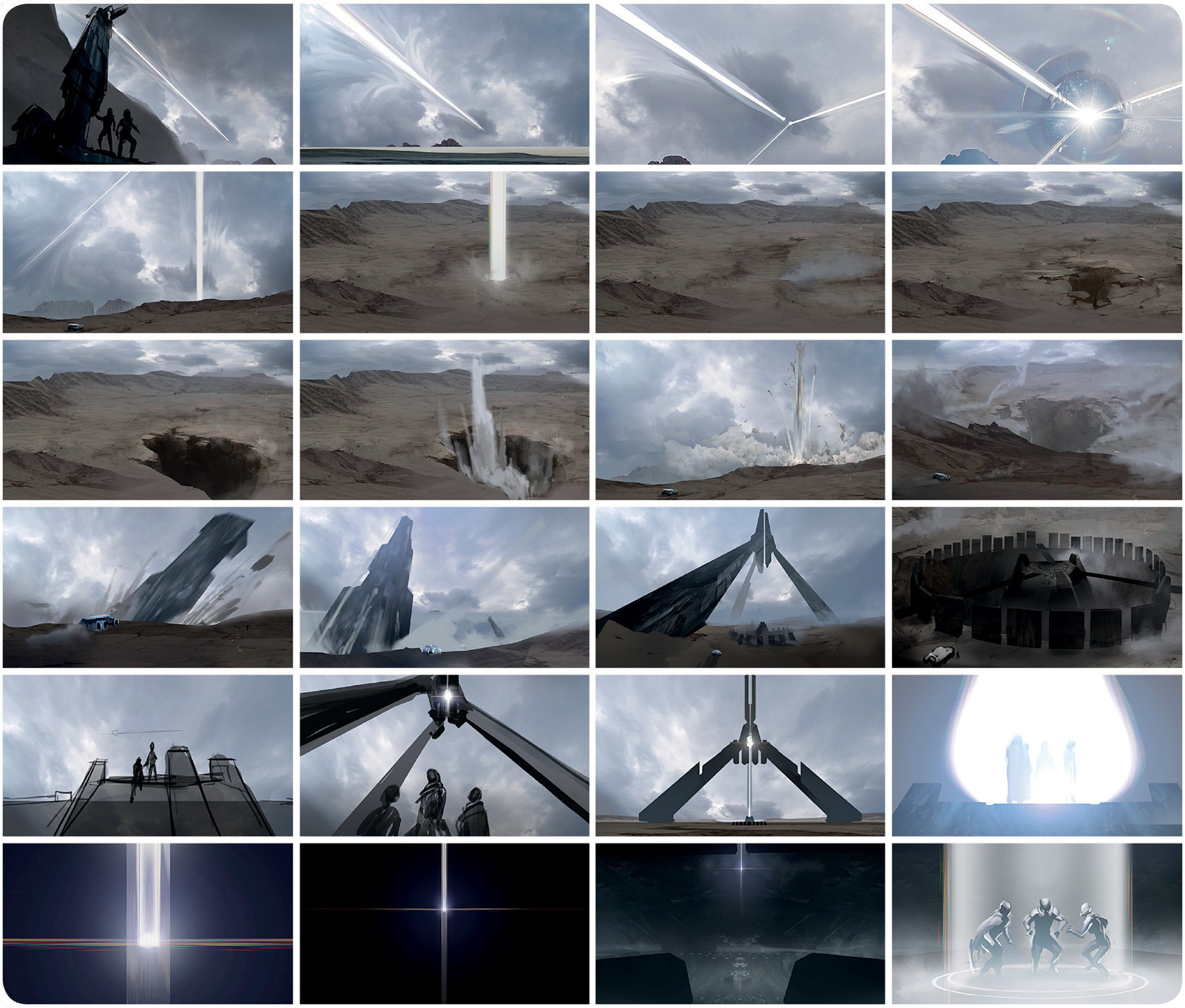
KF: A theme carried throughout much of the Remnant technology is the mechanical-yet-organic vertical movement of a pin box. The idea developed into having the surface of Meridian made up of swarms of massive Remnant ships held together in formation. The surface would open by ripples of these ships moving up and over each other. This would allow for an impressive and very alien transformation giving way to the appearance of a massive tear in space.

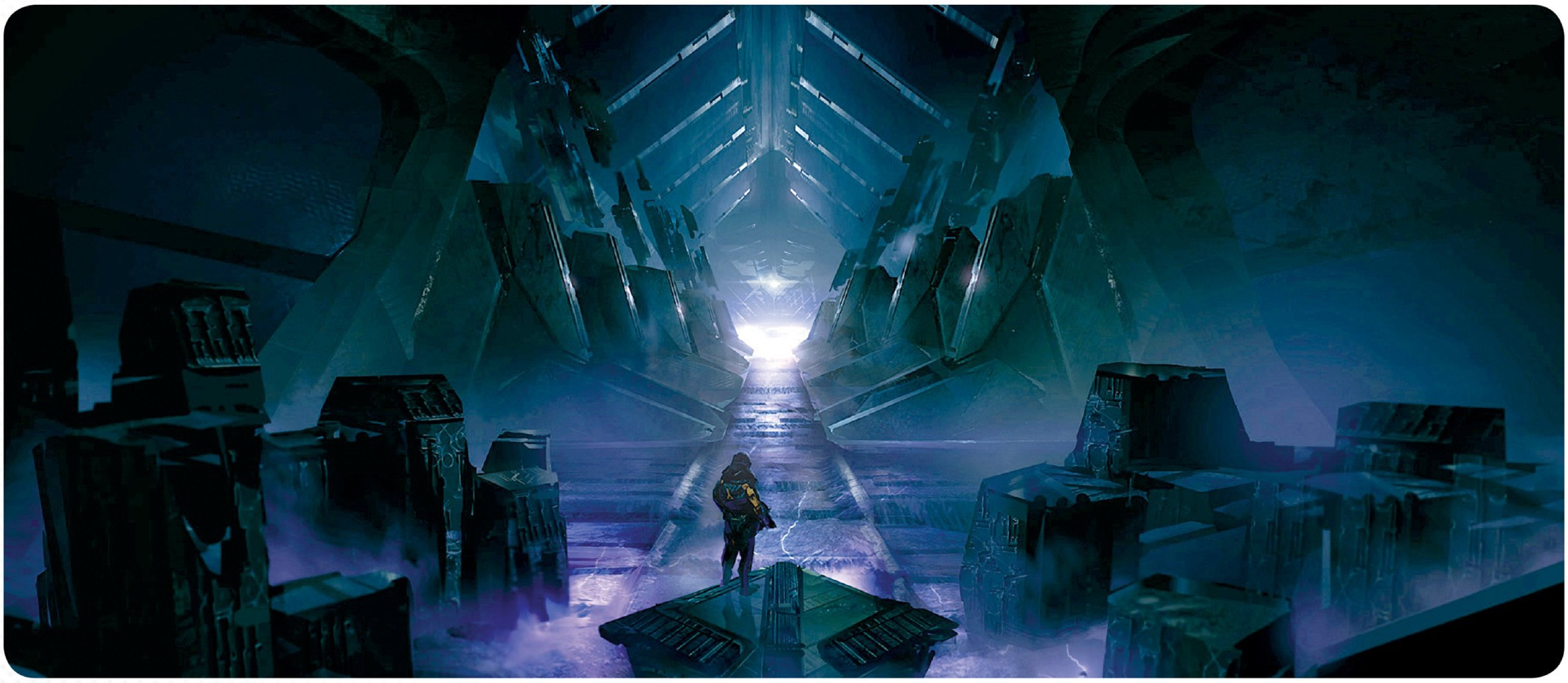


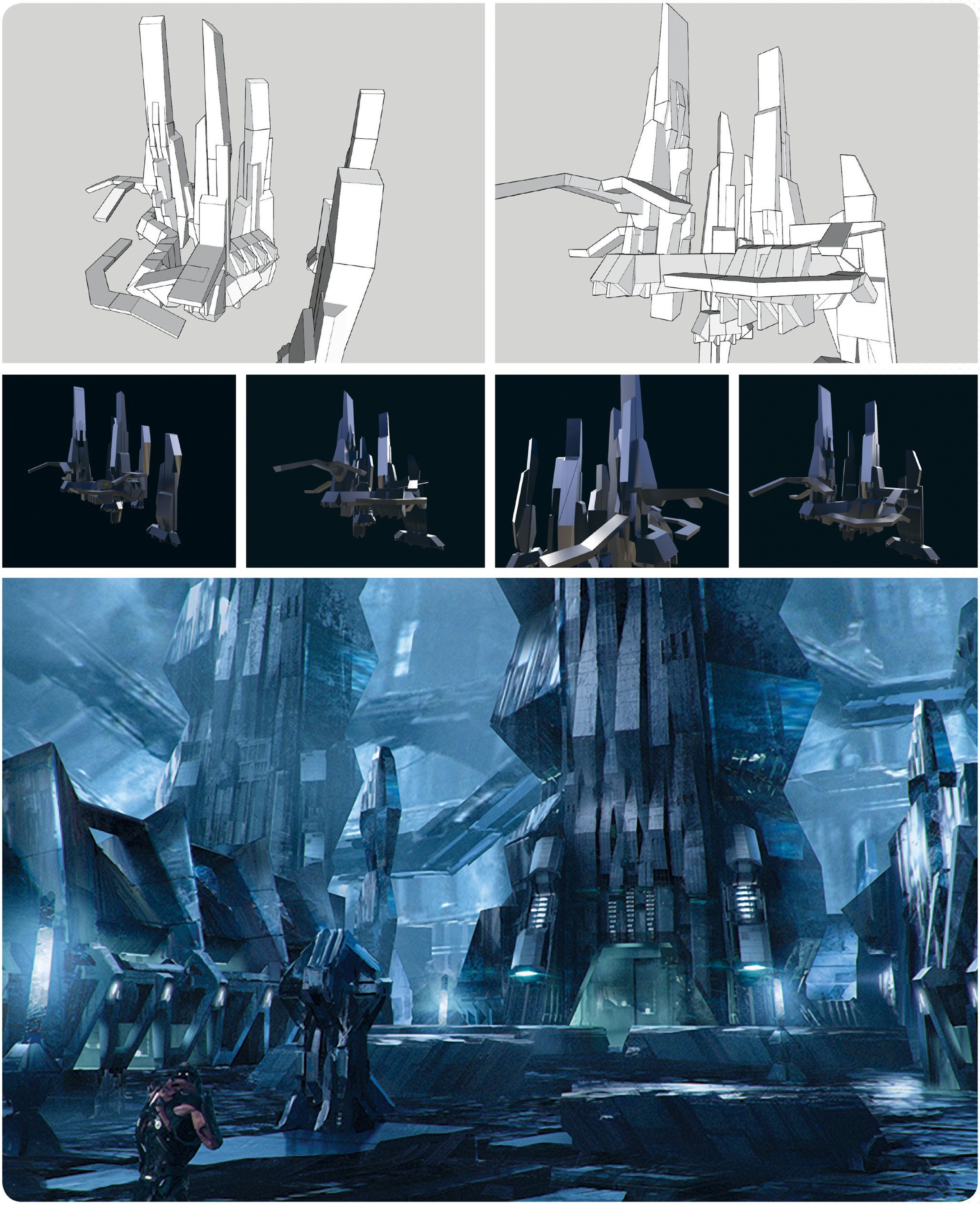




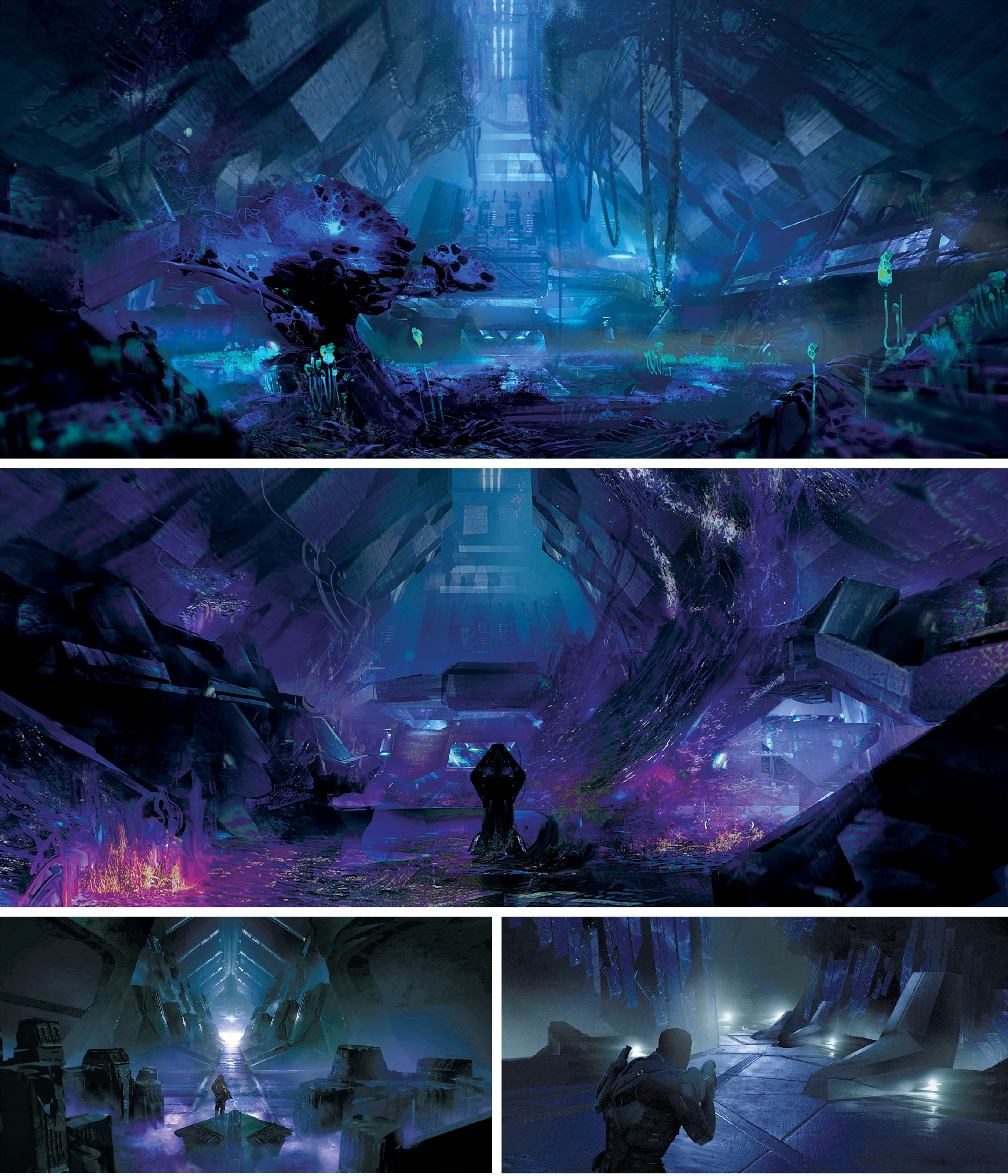




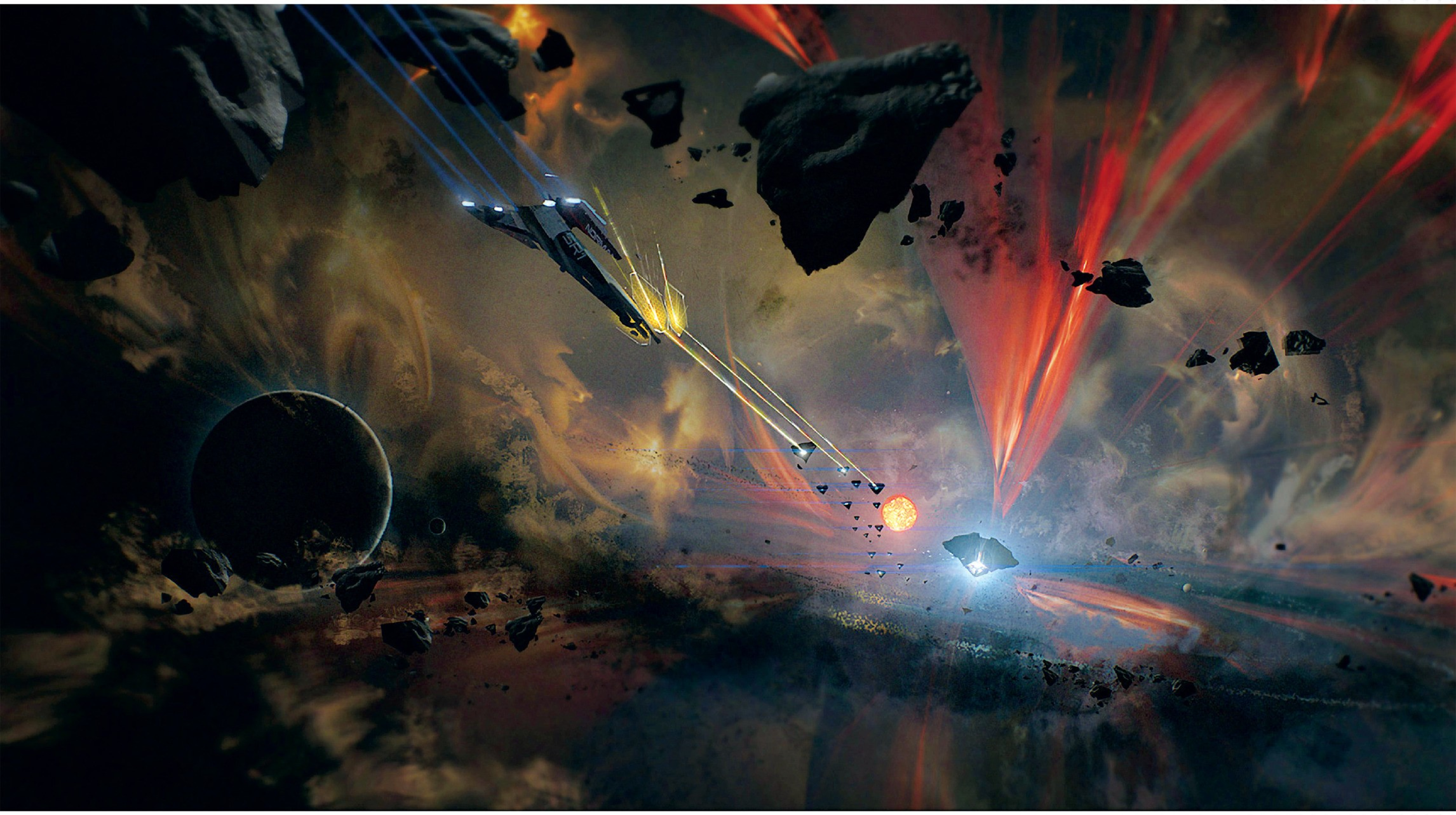


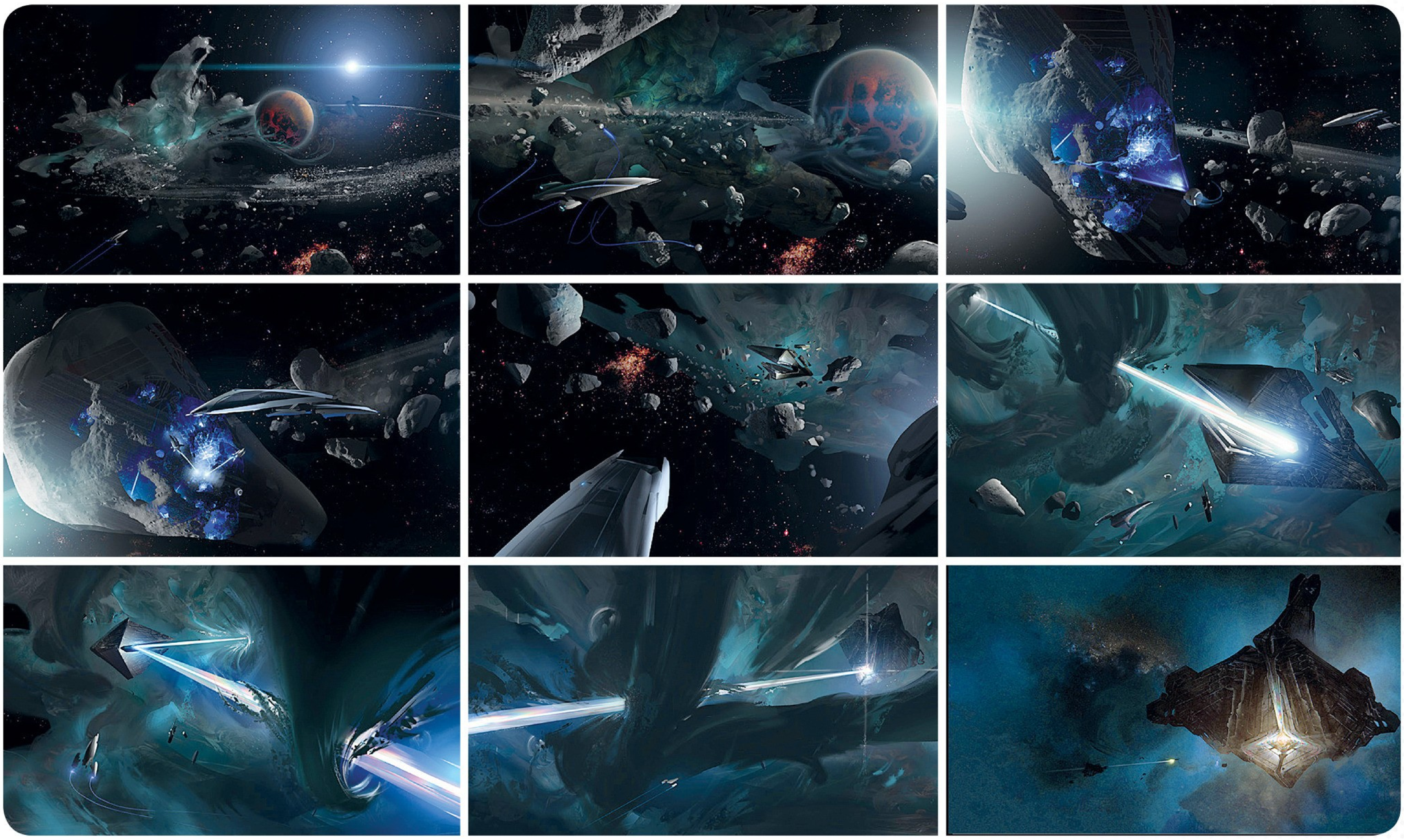


JM: The Remnant city needed to be the pinnacle of the Remnant architecture that we've encountered across the game. The challenge was trying to cultivate some interesting new shapes that looked unique, while still fitting believably with the rest of the architecture we'd developed to this point.



JM: These are the various districts across the Remnant city, each of which needed to have its own identity.





JM: Here we have some further exploration of Remnant space activities and flight patterns.

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